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LOVE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

DELL FLOYD

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Love in Greenwich Village

LOVE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

By

Floyd Dell

Short Story Index Reprint Series

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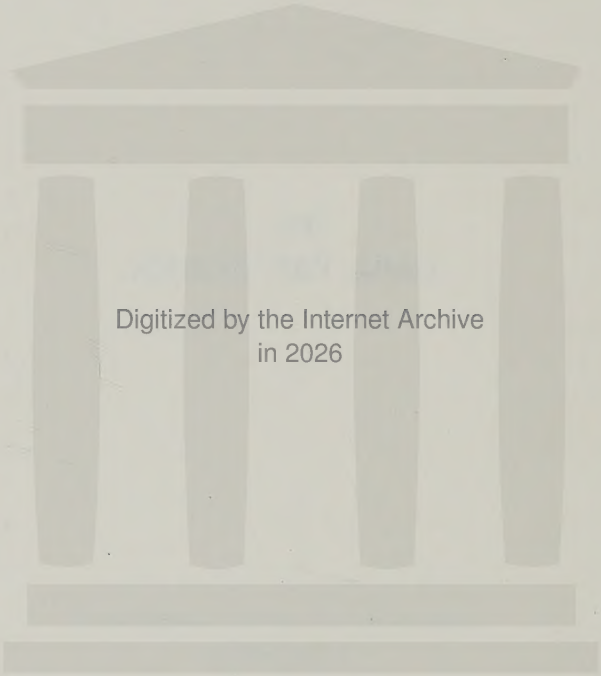
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PROEM: The Rise of Greenwich Village

Do you believe what they say is true?—O hide your tell-tale eyes!—
That we are fools to follow and grasp at beauty as it flies!
What if the joy we capture so only a moment lingers?
A pinch of memory's golden dust between our aching fingers!
Shall we for that withhold our hands and stay our eager feet?
Ah, no—when beauty flutters by, we follow, O my Sweet!

LOVE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

The Rise of Greenwich Village

"All of which I saw, and part of which I was."

GREENWICH VILLAGE, to be sure, has a long history. I might begin, like H. G. Wells, with the time when it was a part of a fiery nebula, and tell how Life first emerged from the primeval slime—but I shall not. And you must look elsewhere for the story of how, after the coming of the white man, the little Indian village of Sappocanican became in the seventeenth century a Dutch settlement, the Bossen Bouwerie, and still later, under English rule, the village of Green Wich. I am no hand at archæology; but I have heard tell that two hundred years ago the town of New York was huddled down in the southernmost tip of Manhattan Island, in what is now the financial section, Green Wich being two miles out of town—an aristocratic country place "up the Hudson." And a quiet

English village it seems to have remained till the Revolution. Under American rule it appears to have enjoyed a boom, being colonized by citizens fleeing from the yellow fever in New York; and thus, a century ago, it became a thriving suburb. Washington Square—originally a Potter's Field and hanging-ground for murderers (or so I have read in a book)—was presently the very center of fashionable life. In this vicinity, moreover, it is said that there once lived such writers as Bayard Taylor, G. W. Curtis, and Edgar Allan Poe. But—

> Not mine to tell of those old times
> When, haunted by immortal rhymes,
> With leaking shoes upon his feet,
> Poe lived and starved in Carmine Street,
> And life was short and love was sweet:
> All this is true, so I daresay—
> But it was long before my day.

As New York expanded hugely northward, this fashionable nineteenth-century residence district was deserted and left to decay into a picturesque twentieth-century slum, in which only the north side of Washington Square still held its head above the mire; and this slum, for economic reasons, became increasingly the home of artists and writers. Yes—

There was a *Greenwich Village* then—
A refuge for tormented men
Whose heads were full of dreams, whose hands
Were weak to do the world's commands:
Builders of palaces on sands—
These, needful of a place to sleep,
Came here, because the rents were cheap.

The rents were cheap because the rush of traffic could not make its way through the little twisted streets that crossed and recrossed each other and never seemed to get anywhere else. That was before Seventh Avenue had been ruthlessly and efficiently cut through as the West Side subway was extended southward; Greenwich Avenue still, like a barrier flung athwart the Village, protected it from the roaring town all about.

Where now the tide of traffic beats,
There was a maze of crooked streets;
The noisy waves of enterprise,
Swift-hurrying to their destinies,
Swept past this island paradise:
Here life went to a gentler pace,
And dreams and dreamers found a place.

And here, safe out of change's way,
The houses crumbled to decay—

Crumbled, yet stood; the rooms inside
Were high and stately, deep and wide,
Memorials of vanished pride:
No modern inconveniences—
And who would live in rooms like these?

Who but the men of paint and rhyme?
Here, out of space and out of time
They dreamed their dreams and had their day
Such as it was, of work and play:
And some were sad, and some were gay—
But no one in the world a word
Of "Greenwich Village" ever heard!

I have listened to Sinclair Lewis, and Paul Turner, and Edna Kenton, and Vachel Lindsay, telling of those early days—the days of the "real" Village, as they proudly say. But *that* Greenwich Village is nevertheless only the dark quasi-prehistoric background to the Village whose story I am to relate.

Like those ancient cities which Schliemann dug up in the Troad, each city resting upon the dust of its forgotten predecessors, so Greenwich Village presents the spectacle of successive layers of ruin. Count them over—that happy Indian village, the busy Dutch settlement, the quiet English hamlet, the fashionable American suburb, and the proud Washington Square period—while the Greenwich

Village of my immediate predecessors may be called the sixth Village. And upon its ruins was built the seventh Village, which I saw come blazing into existence.

That event occurred in 1913. In that year was created the Greenwich Village of which all the world has heard—which has become a byword, which has been loved and feared and laughed at by millions of Americans who have never seen it—and which some clever folk have declared never existed at all outside the realm of fancy. It is of that Greenwich Village that I am going to tell—its rise and fall. For it has fallen, like Troy, like Babylon. Its ruins—lived palely among by the inhabitants of the Eighth and present Village—are a shrine to which the golden youth of America still makes pilgrimages from prairie towns. But it is gone for ever, the Greenwich Village that I knew—and therefore I tell its story.

Its story properly begins with Egeria. (I must be forgiven if in this record I afford some of my old friends the slight disguise of a fanciful nomenclature.) Egeria had the rare gift of being able to start things. Some people, it is true, said that what she inevitably started was trouble; but that was scarcely just to her. Incredibly naïve, preposterously reckless, believing

wistfully in beauty and goodness, a *Candide* in petticoats and sandals, she did always manage to involve herself in complicated difficulties; but she faced those difficulties serenely, and fought her way out of them—into some new thorn-patch. People laughed at her a good deal, and loved her very much indeed, and followed at her beck into the beautiful and absurd schemes she was for ever inventing.

She invented Greenwich Village—the Greenwich Village whose gay laughter was heard around the world. It wasn't at all what she had meant it to be—for she was a very serious young woman, and it was incurably frivolous. But still—she did it!

It is perhaps not strange that, to many, Egeria's gift should have appeared to be destructive. But even when she was breaking something to pieces, she was making something new out of the pieces. Thus it was when she broke up the old Liberal Club. She didn't do it on purpose—she just couldn't help it. She was like one of those catalytic agents in chemistry, that disintegrate and change and recombine whatever bodies they come in contact with. The old Liberal Club was a respectable, well-meaning up-town club, composed mainly of polite old-fashioned believers in the gradual improvement of mankind by going to lectures. Egeria entered it, and it went

into a ferment, and presently there was an explosion. The immediate cause of the explosion, oddly enough, was Egeria's marriage. She couldn't even do so conventional a thing as get married, without creating a terrific sensation and getting headlines in the yellow journals. People took sides fiercely—they were always taking sides, whenever Egeria did anything!—and then the more shocked half of the membership of the club resigned. Egeria took the other half, her faithful friends and followers, and led them into Greenwich Village.

The Village had been quietly there all the time; but from the moment Egeria moved the Liberal Club down there, it was different. She touched it off, and it went up like a sky-rocket: the bright gleams of that pyrotechnic spectacle have hardly yet faded from the sky.

Yes, the Village had been there since time immemorial, with its crooked streets and old buildings; artists and writers had always lived here—but in tiny groups and cliques, mutually indifferent, or secretly suspicious of each other. Each person knew his own little crowd, and that was all; of the rest of his neighbors he was no more aware than if he had lived in an apartment-block up town.

There was no common center, no meeting place for the Village as a whole. And Egeria de-

termined that there should be one. Indeed, without such a center, how would the new invaders, Egeria and her friends, ever get acquainted with those shy and timid aborigines, the artist-folk?

"We need each other," she declared. "They have something to teach us—and we will wake them up!"

Egeria's "we" meant the group of university people, students and professors, the social workers, the newspaper men and women, who accepted her as their leader in rash idealistic enterprises. Egeria herself was a school-teacher.

(Yes, let it not fail to be recorded among the paradoxes of our American social history, that the Greenwich Village of which all the world knows was founded by a school-teacher in all earnestness!)

"Why," Egeria asked, "shouldn't intelligent people to-day have the same chance to know each other that the church and the tavern gave their grandparents?"

The new Liberal Club was to give them that chance. It was to be the social center of Greenwich Village—its tavern and its church.

But if Egeria originated that statesmanlike idea, it was Ernest who really carried it out. Ernest was destined to be the new club's first president, and almost its last. Not quite its last,

for there came a new generation that knew not Ernest and his importance in the Village universe —he ceased to be president—and the club presently ceased to exist: moreover, when the club stopped, the Village, our glorious Seventh Village—came speedily to an end. As the poet has said—

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall—
And when Rome falls, the world."

Who was this extraordinary personage? Not, as might have been expected, a great and many-sided genius; no, it was none of our brilliant fellows, our wits, our dashing intellectuals, and still less one of our artists. Ernest was an engineer, whose daytime job it was to see that the wheels of the Elevated went round properly; truth to tell, he had no imagination whatever. Yet had he been different, there would have been no Village to write about. In his simple prosaic matter-of-factness, he was worth a dozen geniuses.

It was a scornful curiosity that had led him to the old Liberal Club, to hear "a man called Jung" lecture on Dreams! There he fell under the spell of Egeria, and was inevitably drafted into her new scheme of colonizing Greenwich Village.

A practical question had arisen which was beyond Egeria's powers to cope with—the question of finances. Even in those days, when a whole house of huge rooms with high ceilings and fireplaces could be had in the Village for a trifle, that trifle nevertheless loomed tremendous. The remnant of the club was poor, and the prospective new artist and writer members would be poorer still. How run a clubhouse on practically nothing at all? This was the problem that Ernest undertook to solve.

"But why"—some impatient reader might interrupt to complain,—"why is it that in your account of a place known to all the world as the happy playground of artists and writers, they have scarcely as yet appeared in the picture?" That is as it should be. The artists and writers, as a matter of plain fact, had nothing whatever to do with the founding of their little republic. It was founded for them by a school-teacher, an engineer, and a restaurant-keeper.

For Ernest decided that the club, to be a success, must be run in conjunction with a restaurant. He discovered a restaurant-keeper called, affectionately, Polly. And the problem was solved.

Polly is a mystery, and one that I do not pretend to fathom. She had come from the staid and quiet suburban town of Evanston, Illinois.

And she herself was in appearance staid and quiet and suburban; yet she collected about her in her restaurant the wildest and noisiest horde of young folk in America. Over this motley collection, drawn from the four corners of the continent, she presided with a benignant serenity. Doubtless she liked it. She must have enjoyed being the madonna of these truants and orphans. She saw to it that these spoiled, reckless, wayward children were properly fed, whether or not they had the money to pay for it. And for all I know, she may have sewed their buttons on. . . .

Her right-hand man in this enterprise was the picturesque Hippolyte. He was an anarchist, and a gentle soul, but somewhat formidable in aspect, despite his diminutive size, what with his fierce mustachios and goatee, and his occasional outbursts of volcanic invective. "Bourgeois pigs!" was his favorite descriptive phrase. He had been, it was said, in half the prisons of Europe—not at all a bad record for one who could cater to the Village, where laws and policemen were held in slight regard. Hippolyte was cook, waiter, dishwasher and chief conversationalist at the new restaurant. Without Hippolyte, the Village might have existed, but it would not have been what it was. Without Polly, it could scarcely have come into existence.

But if these were the founders of the Village,

its true presiding spirit, its inspirer and guide and stimulus, was Grace. It would wrong her to say that she was its organizer. It would be truer to call her the flame at which its new life was kindled. She was wonderful, adorable, beautiful, restless, serene—but who can describe Grace? Not I. We were all in love with her; and we all still are.

Egeria's dream, after a fashion of its own, came true. . . . Artists and writers must eat; they came to Polly's, delighted to find real home-cooking: and afterward they stayed to dance and talk in the rooms of the Liberal Club upstairs. They became acquainted with each other—which is the secret of all that happened afterward. The touchy, proud, suspicious, irascible stand-offishness which is characteristic of the struggling young artist in America, vanished under the genial influences of Polly's savory meals and the alluring strains of ragtime from the Liberal Club phonograph. At the little gayly-painted tables in that basement room, and on the dancing-floor above, they are inspired to make friendships, to give parties, and to fall in love.

To the club and restaurant there flocked, moreover, what was just beginning to be playfully called "the intelligentsia." Many of these had their actual residence elsewhere in the city, but their spiritual home was in Greenwich Village.

Some of them, indeed, unable to stay away, moved into the garrets and basements of the district, painting their furniture in bright colors, and being happy—for the first time in their lives, as they enthusiastically declared. In how many unsuspected minds there lurks the child's desire to live in a garret! Here they could fulfill that simple wish. Among them were scholars, scientists, historians, and such like serious folk, as well as story-tellers and picture-makers. There were also "leaders of revolts": for instance, there was Big Bill, with his one eye and his great fist and his soft voice—a radical labor leader, the hero of a hundred battles in the war of the classes.

And there were girls by the score, young and lovely and eager; wanting to write, to paint, to act, to see life and to live it. An exciting young world, full of high purpose and serious endeavor —and that may have been why its play was so golden and its love so lovely.

Up on Greenwich Avenue was the office of the *Masses*. It declared itself in its editorial manifesto to be "a Revolutionary and Not a Reform Magazine; a Magazine with a Sense of Humor and No Respect for the Respectable; Frank; Arrogant; Impertinent; a Magazine whose Final Policy is to Do What It Pleases, and Conciliate

Nobody, Not Even Its Readers." It did not pay for contributions, because it had no money; but it was felt to be a privilege to appear in its pages. The contributions were submitted anonymously at a monthly meeting of the editors and their friends, and voted on. John Sloan and Max Eastman could be seen at these meetings, engaging in wordy battles over a poem or a picture, with Art Young and John Reed, George Bellows and Louis Untermeyer, Mary Vorse and Arturo Giovannitti, Horatio Winslow and Howard Brubaker holding up their hands for and against—a lively method of editorial decision which once aroused our guest Hippolyte to protest against the desecration of bringing democracy into the realm of art. "But," some one asked, "don't even anarchists have to make editorial decisions?" "Yes," said Hippolyte, "but we do not abide by our decisions!" To tell the truth, neither did we.

From late in 1913, when I came to New York, I was with the magazine during the hectic years of its brief career—for it was frequently suppressed by the postal authorities, who were offended by the boldness both of its art and its opinions. Max Eastman was the acting editor: tall, handsome, sleek, and in repose as lazy looking as a hound-dog lying on the hearth, he exhibited an immense energy on the platform; he

was one of the two real orators I have heard in my lifetime—and his best speech, I think, was made at the *Masses'* trial, when what were left of its editors were solemnly prosecuted for making jokes about the war for democracy. The war had scattered and divided us; friend was set against old friend; and even if that had not been unhappily true, the war would inevitably have brought to an end that glorious intellectual playtime in which art and ideas, free self-expression and the passion of propaganda, were for one moment happily mated.

Let me speak of one of our number, John Reed, *our* "marvelous boy" and "sleepless soul that perished in his pride"—a great, husky, untamed youth of immense energies and infantine countenance, who had helped Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Arturo Giovannitti organize the Paterson strike; who presently went to Mexico and then to Europe as a war correspondent; who tossed off beautiful poems, and poetic plays, and stories full of a profound zest for life. He was adventurer and artist, playboy and propagandist. He never had time, in the hurry of life and adventure, to be wholly the creative artist in literature that he might have been; but in all that he touched he showed himself a poet. Writing, for propaganda purposes, of a political trial in Chicago, he could not help throwing off such sentences as this:

"Small on the huge bench sits a wasted man with untidy white hair, an emaciated face in which two burning eyes are set like jewels, parchment skin split by a crack for a mouth; the face of Andrew Jackson three years dead. This is Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis."

Too full of a restless energy to pause and tamely nurture any single one of his many great gifts, driven by a daimonic impatience to expend his youth recklessly upon a thousand rash and lofty adventures, now becoming for a moment the historian of the Russian revolution, and again turning aside to organize a revolutionary party in America, he went back into Russia for new adventures—never to return. There in Russia, as "Tovarish Jack," he leaves a memory of fiery and high-hearted youth, that "would have nothing or impossible things." He lies buried under the walls of the Kremlin.

When I had been in New York only a few days, Egeria came to my room on Washington Square South and asked me to do a play for the opening of the Liberal Club. Jack Reed was to have done it, but he was leaving for Mexico as a war correspondent.

I had never done any plays, and so I said I would. Besides, one always did what Egeria asked.

Going to the club-rooms, I found that there was no stage, no curtain, no costumes, and no money. So, gathering a group of people who wanted to act, I proposed to present a play "in the Chinese manner," without scenery and with much make-believe; and I proceeded to tell them a fable, which Arthur Davison Ficke and I had invented over a luncheon-table, of St. George in Greenwich Village—a satire upon the earnest Bohemianism of our little world. *St. George* was to be one of those young men who go about urging young women to free themselves from the bonds of conventionality; the rock on which the poor damsel was immured was a parlor chair, and the *Dragon* was her very correct and respectable aunt. Having freed the girl, *St. George* found that she wanted him to marry her; he did, and they settled down, and presently a baby appeared, brought in by a stork propelled by the *Property Man* in the best Chinese manner. Not knowing what to do with the baby, *Priscilla*—that was the name we gave her—took advice of a neighbor, *Mrs. Flub,* who urged the Montessori System upon her. "What! you've never heard of the Montessori System? Why, my dear, it's simply a lot of things. And you put the baby down among the things—and you never have to bother about it again!" Thus relieved of the burdens of parenthood, *Priscilla* cultivated her soul, go-

ing in successively for suffrage, anarchism, and authorship under *Mrs. Flub's* guidance; while *St. George* gave up his business and became a Futurist painter, whereupon *Priscilla* turned practical, and started a tea-shop! Helen Westley was the *Dragon,* and Sherwood Anderson, visiting Greenwich Village at the outset of his literary career, adorned one of the minor parts. Every one invented his own lines, and forgot them, and made up new and better ones on the spur of the moment; and the play, because it made fun of our own earnest "modernity," was tremendously successful, and was thus the first of a series of little plays that were given over a period of several years, during which we acquired a movable stage, a curtain, footlights, scenery, and costumes galore, but lost, inevitably, that first fine careless rapture.

Beginning in this accidental and happy-go-lucky manner, our Liberal Club theater has nevertheless its place in the history of the Little Theater movement in New York. For a while it was the only one, and it was followed by the Washington Square Players, the Provincetown Players, and the Theater Guild; and many who were active in our productions at the Liberal Club had some share in these later undertakings.

We ourselves were too interested in enjoying ourselves to achieve much beyond that enjoyment.

Yet I can remember some very happy touches in the acting of Jo Gotsch, Edward Goodman, Kirah Markham, Clement Wood, Marjorie Jones, Justus Sheffield, Berkeley Tobey, and others; and in certain fantastic costumes designed by Jean Starr Untermeyer. In my exuberance I designed and executed most of the scenery, and, against the protests of all my friends, acted in most of the plays myself, as well as writing them. But where these productions fell short of dramatic art, they did succeed in being gay communal ritual. In them the village laughed at itself and relished the mockery.

The Provincetown Players' Theater, which followed these happy amateur theatricals, was a more ambitious undertaking. Its guiding spirit was George Cram Cook—"Jig," as he was called. Poet, novelist, sculptor, dramatist, he was another of those fiery ones who can not be content with the small satisfactions that life has to offer; another who was forever turning aside from the broad highway to make new paths through the wilderness. He organized the Provincetown Players one summer down on Cape Cod, and brought them to New York to prove that there was more drama in America than was dreamed of on Broadway. Here were to be seen plays by Susan Glaspell, by Eugene O'Neill, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. And having made New York

come down to a Macdougal Street stable to see the most vivid drama that the town could boast, he went to Greece in pursuit of some other dream, and died there.

When the Provincetown Players were starting their venture, and a play of mine was to be given, I remember how, in response to a call for some girl to play an ingénue part, a slender little girl with red-gold hair came to the greenroom over the stable, and read the lines of *Annabelle* in "The Angel Intrudes." She looked her frivolous part to perfection, and read the lines so winningly that she was at once engaged—at a salary of nothing at all, that being our artistic custom. She left her name and address as she was departing, and when she was gone we read the name and were puzzled, for it was "Edna Millay." We wondered if she could possibly be Edna St. Vincent Millay, the author of that beautiful and astonishing poem, "Renascence."

And indeed it was she. Having just been graduated from Vassar, she had come to New York to seek fame not as a poet, but as an actress: for who could expect to make a living at writing poetry? She acted in several plays at our theater, and put on some of her own, including her tremendously impressive "Aria da Capo." But the stage, as it turned out, could offer even more meager rewards than poetry, and so Edna Millay

turned back to her first Muse, fortunately for American literature. She lived one icebound, dreadful winter in a tiny room on Waverly Place, a few doors from the house where Poe wrote "Ligeia." The house she lived in may one day be known as the place where "She is Overheard Singing" and "O think not I am faithful to a vow" were written. She lived in that gay poverty which is traditional of the village, and one may find vivid reminiscences of that life in her poetry:

"We were very tired, we were very merry—
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon."

It was, for all of us, a life that was quaintly enriched by our poverty. How otherwise, except by being very poor, should we ever have learned to make the most of those joys that are so cheap, or that cost nothing at all, the joys of comradeship and play and mere childlike fun? When some one had sold something, we trailed across

Washington Square to spend the money gorgeously in the basement of the Brevoort; but when there was no such luck, there was always the Staten Island ferry, or the Fifth Avenue bus —and always and always there was talk to keep us up till dawn. I remember an evening of still more infantile folly, when Theodore Dreiser and a table full of painters and poets and actresses and editors played "Up Jenkins!"—a noisy, rowdy, childish game with much thumping on the table and shouting and laughter—in one of those basement restaurants, forgetful of time, until we were interrupted by a policeman who had been drawn from blocks away by the sounds of our abandoned revelry—and we realized that it was nearly dawn, and that we had been alone in the place for hours! The next time I see Dreiser, I will remind him of that incident; he will grin sheepishly, and unfold and refold his handkerchief, and rock back and forth in his perpetual rocking-chair, and say: "A mad world, my masters!"

Having created the Village, Egeria would perhaps have unmade it if she could. For there were many things she did not like about it; and the thing she liked the least of all was the thing which most luridly advertised it to the outside world—its careless freedom from restraint in matters of love. Vagabond youth has always ignored the

codes invented by those who have settled down and have a property-stake in the world. Security means little to young artists, and the opinion of the world still less. Love, they know, is sweet while it lasts. In Greenwich Village this attitude quickly became the social norm. Secrecy and hypocrisy were unnecessary there. And there, if anywhere, youth could discover fearlessly for itself, and not out of the leaves of musty books, the truths of human nature.

In the Village, at this time, we could talk freely enough about such things, because they were not scandalous to any hearer. They might be sad, or they might be—and often were—funny; but they seemed to us eminently natural. These marriages without benefit of clergy, these divorces without benefit of lawyers, these idyls and these heartbreaks without benefit of newspaper notoriety—what can be said of them now that will be true to the spirit in which they were lived? One incident will perhaps serve as well as many. And the one I should like to tell, if I can find words for it, is the story of—as I might call them—Paul and Rosika. In some respects it was not an altogether everyday occurrence, but in its essence it was sufficiently characteristic of the Village.

Paul, who was nineteen and wanted to be a writer of plays, had run away from a booming Southern town where that ambition was regarded

as a species of madness, and had come to Greenwich Village—where, if what he had heard was true, he would be regarded as a normal human being.

He was not disappointed. Having taken his meals at Polly's for some weeks, during which he looked for a job without success, he became acquainted there; and when his new friends discovered that he was worried because his money was running short, they assured him that the Village would not let him starve. Presently he was invited by one of our number, Dirck, to share his garret in Patchin Place. Dirck was one of those tragi-comic figures of whom the Village had its due share—a writer who did not write. Dirck dreamed of a great novel, but he never could write a perfect first page: and until the first page was perfect, why go on to the second? He agonized over that first page for years, and in the intervals of these agonies he did, hastily and perfunctorily, various kinds of hack-work. He cynically inducted Paul into the mysteries of book-reviewing, and they would sit up all night with a pile of books on the table, flipping the pages, and clicking out the reviews on their typewriters. When Paul occasionally forgot, and paused to read one of the books he was reviewing, or seemed to labor unduly over a sentence, Dirck would curse him genially and ask, "What do you think you are doing—

writing for posterity?" On other nights they would sit up, after their friends had gone home, smoking endless cigarettes and confiding to each other the nature of the masterpieces they intended to do some time.

Across the hall lived a little girl named Rosika. She had come to New York, after having been a cabaret dancer somewhere. She spent her days haunting the agencies, and her evenings practising or exercising noisily to a raucous little phonograph. She also used to borrow the books which Paul and Dirck had reviewed, before they took them out and sold them. She read these books indiscriminately, having an inordinate respect for anything printed; yet Paul and Dirck could never get her to express an opinion about anything she had read. When the cold spell came on that winter, and the gas-pressure became so feeble that she could not warm her room with her little gas-stove, she would come to theirs, where they indulged in the luxury of a wood fire in the grate. She would sit curled up in a big chair, looking like a child as she bent over her book—and indeed, she wasn't more than eighteen. She was so quiet that they sometimes forgot she was there. One evening she startled them, as Dirck was in the midst of extravagant talk of his unwritten masterpiece, by saying scornfully: "Yes! and when you do write that masterpiece,

who will review it?—A couple of Greenwich Village bums who are busy talking about the masterpieces *they* are going to write, and haven't any time to read yours!"

Paul flushed at the taunt. He didn't like to be called a Greenwich Village bum. It was too much like certain harsh phrases in his father's letters. . . . But Dirck turned to her, blew out a cloud of cigarette smoke thoughtfully, and said: "You're right, Sis. And that's why I don't write my masterpiece. And—if I *was* such a damn fool—those Greenwich Village bums would be wise not to waste their time reading it. Masterpieces should never be written—they should only be thought about, and talked about. Once written—they're masterpieces no longer, they're like everything else in this cheesy world. I take it that you accuse us of being dreamers. We plead guilty, don't we, Paul?"

Paul did not reply. He did not want to plead guilty of being merely a dreamer. It might be all right for Dirck, who was nearly thirty years old and hadn't done anything yet, to confess himself a failure. But he was still young. With the blood pounding in his temples, he turned on the girl.

"And what are you, I'd like to know?" he demanded bitterly. "Do you think you're in a position to criticize *us?* What have *you* done?"

"Nothing, yet," she said coolly. "But I *shall* do something, all right."

"Yes, what? Dream and starve—and starve and dream—like the rest of us!" It was not like Paul to be so ill-mannered, but her taunt had curiously unstrung his nerves. "What have you to offer the world?" he went on savagely. "Are you so different from the thousands of other girls that come to New York every year looking for fame? What hope—"

"Yes," she said stubbornly, "I *am* different."

Dirck put his hand gently on Paul's shoulder. "Never mind," he said. "Let her think so. We all think that—for a while. She's only a kid. Let her dream on."

"You think I'm just a dreamer, do you?" That seemed to anger her, as her own taunt had angered Paul. "Well, I'll show you, some time!"

"All right—I'll be waiting!" Paul answered contemptuously.

"You may not have to wait so long—" She sprang up, snapped her fingers, and cried: "You want to be shown, do you? Well, if you've got eyes to see with, I can show you now!" She ran to Dirck's phonograph, dusty in a corner, threw half a dozen records to the floor, set a piece of ragtime going, and commenced to dance. In a queer off-key voice that nevertheless had in it a strange barbaric quality, she sang the words as

she danced; and it was no ordinary dance, for it seemed to bring the hot breath of the jungle into the room. At the end she drooped as though discouraged; and before Paul could say a word, Dirck, at the phonograph, had swiftly changed the record, and he recognized the opening notes of a piece of half-Oriental gypsy-music. In a moment she had seized up the particolored silk covering from Dirck's couch, slipped the dress from her shoulders and kicked it aside, wrapped herself in the silken folds, and was dancing an improvisation—or was it improvisation? . . . for her movements seemed woven into the very texture of the music. Dirck quietly turned the record over, and her peacock rhythms melted into the soft melancholy of the ending. She stood there, letting her draperies slip to the floor, faced them defiantly for a moment, then snatched up her dress and fled across the hall without a word.

Paul and Dirck looked at each other.

"By God!" Dirck whispered.

Paul went across the hall, knocked at her door, and pushed it open.

"Well?" she asked him, in a hard tone.

"It was—wonderful!" he cried.

"You think maybe I *can* dance, then?"

"Of course you can! And with your youth and your beauty—"

She burst into tears. . . . He put his arms

about her, and she clung to him. "It isn't—just a dream of mine?" she asked, with deep eyes hungrily intent for his praise.

"No!" he cried. "It's real enough!"

"And I'm going to be a—a famous dancer?"

"You are! I swear you are!"

She lifted her lips to his . . . and said presently:

"You know so much—will you teach me a little?"

"Teach you—what?" he asked, in bewilderment.

"To speak beautifully—your voice is like music—and to know what words mean, and to understand books. And to write words myself."

"To write words!" he echoed in amazement.

"Yes—I've been trying to teach myself, out of your books. But I don't know what the words mean, some of them. And there are so many things I want to know! I have never gone to school. My father works in the mills back at home, and doesn't even speak English. We came from Hungary when I was ten. I have worked in factories, and danced in cabarets—I know nothing. Will you teach me—and be my sweetheart?"

Unsteadily, in a desperate attempt to be chivalrous, Paul answered: "I will teach you, and be your friend."

"That is what I mean!" said Rosika, and lifted her lips to be kissed again. . . .

And, as it turned out, Rosika could not understand the distinction between being friends and sweethearts—nor did Paul argue the point with her further. . . .

He never saw her cry again. Hard, eager, aflame with ambition, she knew exactly what she wanted, and learned it quickly enough. And it is not strange if her young ambition kindled his own. He must prove to her that he too was no dreamer! He presently set to work once more on his play. . . . But long before that play was finished, Rosika had begun to find the fame she coveted. . . .

And one day Paul—who no longer lived with Dirck, but had a studio of his own—sat in a state of suppressed emotional excitement, trying to calm himself by reading "The Love Sonnets of Proteus." From time to time he nervously pulled out his watch; he was expecting Rosika, and he had something important to say to her. He paused at one sonnet, and read it over, half-aloud:

"If I had chosen thee, thou shouldst have been
A virgin proud, untamed, immaculate,
Chaste as the morning star, a saint, a queen,
Scarred by no wars, no violence of hate;

Thou shouldst have been of soul commensurate
With thy fair body—brave and virtuous
And kind and just; and if of poor estate,
At least an honest woman for my house.
I would have had thee come of honored blood
And honorable nurture. Thou shouldst bear
Sons to my pride and daughters to my heart,
And men should hold thee happy, wise, and good.
Lo, thou art none of this, but only fair!
Yet must I love thee, dear, and as thou art."

He repeated the last line softly: "Yet must I love thee, dear, and as thou art!" There was a ring at the bell, and he jumped up. But instead of Rosika, there was a messenger-boy, with a letter addressed in Rosika's unformed handwriting. He tore it open.

"Dear Paul,"—the letter ran—"this is as good a time as any to say what I have to say and do what I have to do. If I tried to tell you, there would be only more quarrels and making-ups. We are getting to care too much—and you are so jealous—and there must be no more talk of marriage, for that would be very foolish. No, the time has come for us to part. You have meant a great deal to me—more than anybody else, ever—and I hope I have been something to you, too. Go on and do the wonderful things you can

do—and good-by. I shall always be your friend, Rosika."

"Is there any answer?" asked the messenger-boy.

"No." He shut the door, and went back to his chair, looked blindly at the open book of sonnets and brushed it to the floor,—and then forlornly put his arms on the table and cried—a child whose bright toy has been snatched away by a cruel hand. . . .

For that was what happened inevitably in this eager, hard, ambitious young world of dreams and struggle—that was love in Greenwich Village.

I. The Kitten and the Masterpiece

Leave my sword alone, you hussy—
  There is blood upon the blade;
Dragon-slaying's but a messy
  Sort of trade: put back the blade.

Take my knee and . . . O, you darling!
  One forgets how sweet you are!
Snarling dragons—flowing flagons—
  Devil take the morning star!

The Kitten and the Masterpiece

ONCE, when news was scarce, a certain newspaper propounded to its readers the following problem of conduct: "If you were in a burning building, and could save either a great masterpiece, such as the 'Mona Lisa,' or a child you had never seen before, which would you save?"

The question aroused general interest, and the newspaper discussion continued throughout the summer. Philosophers, clergymen, chorus girls, painters, politicians, and other eminent personages were asked which they would save, the child or the masterpiece? Among them was H. G. Wells and he replied, "I would save the child, or, if it were a kitten, the kitten."

But this anecdote has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the story that follows.

In the days when rents were low in Greenwich Village and artists and writers really lived there, Paul Sherwood had the second-floor hall bedroom in one of those decaying houses on the south side of Washington Square. Those were the days when the inhabitants of Greenwich Vil-

lage, in spite of their poverty, took life gayly. But in this matter Paul was an exception. He lived in Greenwich Village because his rent was only eight dollars a month. And he rather begrudged that much.

He was writing a novel. He had been wanting to write that novel for two years. During most of those two years he had been working every day at one job or another, and at night finding himself too tired to write; he could only think for a while of what he would like to write, and then uneasily fall asleep, remembering that the alarm clock would go off at six in the morning. Sometimes he thought about his novel during working hours; but sometimes, as when he worked in a shipyard and had the job of holding a pail to catch red-hot rivets tossed from a considerable distance, he did not dare to think about anything so remote and beautiful. He did write a little on Sundays and, when his work was not too tiring, late into the night; but when his job was easy enough to permit that, the pay was too poor to save anything out of. And he had to save up for a year of leisure in which to write his novel.

Before this wild ambition had come to possess him, he had been a sort of dreamy vagabond and unskilled worker, fond of talk and reading, who drifted from place to place and job to job, not caring much what he did so long as he could

spend his evenings browsing at the free public library or talking with some fellow-vagabond about the universe. He had read everything and discussed everything, and had been happy in a detached and philosophic way; but the day came when he wanted to write. And then he had lived as a man lives in a prison from which he plans to escape.

He had tried too desperately to escape, working too hard and eating too little, and losing precious time in illness and convalescence. So, what with one kind of luck and another, it was some time before he had saved up the five hundred dollars upon which he intended to live for a whole year and write his novel.

Five hundred dollars—with that fortune he moved into Greenwich Village and began his new career. Everything was figured carefully into his budget—rent, food, gas, paper and ink, and even an occasional visit to the theater, if a Shaw play should be in town. In the course of his reading he had become a devotee of Shaw. He conceived himself as another sort of *Cashel Byron,* with perhaps a touch of Jack London in him. If he had not seen everything, at least he had seen through everything. He was twenty-six years old, and he had no doubt that he possessed the divine fire.

Five hundred dollars a year is nine dollars and

sixty-one cents a week,—or nine dollars and sixty-two cents, if you want to call the odd fraction a cent. But preferring to be always on the safe side in his finances, he thought of his weekly income as nine dollars and sixty-one cents.

A novel contains anywhere from eighty thousand to a hundred and sixty thousand words. His would be a fairly long novel. But one can easily write fifteen hundred words a day, and at that rate his novel would be finished in a little over three months. However, he wanted to be conservative in his expectations; at the very least, then, he would write five hundred words a day, and have his novel finished in ten months, with plenty of time left to revise it in.

Every dollar in his hoard meant seventeen-and-a-half hours of freedom, and a page done toward his novel. These were his plans.

He began by discarding the fragments he had already written and starting in afresh. The first day he wrote a thousand words. Every day for a week he rewrote that thousand words. Then for four months he wrote furiously, rewrote furiously, and sometimes furiously threw what he had written into the waste-basket. During the last week he wrote at the rate of ten thousand words a day. At the end of those four months he had written nearly half a million words, and thrown most of them away; but there remained

as real accomplishment ten long chapters—the first half of his novel.

He spent three weeks in the work of revision, and then cast up his accounts. He was exactly on schedule in his writing, and six dollars and thirty cents ahead in his finances. Moreover, he was very tired. He had worked steadily from June to November, and so it seemed entirely reasonable that he should go out and spend some of that six dollars and thirty cents on amusement.

He took from his carefully secreted hoard a twenty-dollar bill. He would get it changed, and look in the paper to see if there was a Shaw play in town that night.

He changed the bill at a delicatessen, and put six dollars and thirty cents in his right-hand trousers pocket to spend. The other thirteen dollars and seventy cents he put in his left-hand trousers pocket, as in a safety-deposit vault. It was for the present untouchable and sacred. It meant, that thirteen dollars and seventy cents, ten more days of freedom and five thousand more words.

He bought a newspaper. There was no Shaw play in town. If there had been, doubtless things would not have happened as they did.

What happened was that on the following noon he tramped through the snowy streets of Greenwich Village in a gaudy turban and an

overcoat which did not conceal the fact that his legs were bare. Underneath the overcoat was a florid masquerade costume patched up for him out of scraps of colored cloth by a girl he had never seen before last night. His clothes were at her studio, and he was on his way there to get them. He hoped she would be awake by now. He had been there twice before this morning, on the same errand, vainly.

She wasn't awake, but this time she reluctantly roused at his knock, and sleepily thrust his clothes through the door into his arms. She was too sleepy to notice that he still had on his masquerade costume under his overcoat; she didn't know that he had only the one suit of clothes. And as he couldn't very well dress in her hallway, he walked home, in his bare legs, with his clothes over his arm.

When that girl had improvised his costume for him last night, an artistic costume without any pockets, he had wondered what to do with his money; and she had given him a safety-pin with which to pin his bills inside the folds of his robe. "You can keep your loose change in your turban," she had said.

That had seemed at the time a sensible arrangement. The only trouble was that it mingled together the sacred money which belonged to the next ten days and the money which had been dedi-

cated to an evening's amusement. That was doubtless the reason for the fact which he now pondered soberly—the fact that it was all spent except twenty cents.

In his room he dressed himself in his own clothes, kicked the others into a corner, and considered. He had twenty cents, and he needed to think. So he took the elevated downtown and the ferry to Staten Island, and walked out along a lonely road.

He was ashamed of himself. What had happened seemed to prove that he was not the stuff of which an artist is made. He was too human.

Yet at the beginning there had appeared to be no danger. He had intended to enjoy himself for an hour or two with his new-found Village friends, spend his six dollars, and go home. One of them had given him a ticket to the masquerade; another, the girl at the studio, had furbished up a costume for him. He in turn had contributed most of his six dollars to buy ingredients for the punch which helped enliven the long prelude to the party while everybody was getting ready to go. He had merely tasted that punch; that wasn't the trouble. The trouble was that little girl he had met at the masquerade.

She had a name that was like herself—June Glory. She had been delightful, a wonderful per-

son to find anywhere in the world, and doubly wonderful to discover at a masquerade which became hour by hour more drab, more dull, more pathetic in its rowdy efforts at gayety—or so it seemed to one who had merely tasted the preliminary punch. She had redeemed the occasion for him. She talked as she danced, lightly, surely, with an instant response to his thought.

When her friends carried her away from him at last, the ball became something merely to be endured; and when he had endured it enough, he started to go. Then he saw her again; she was looking very tired.

"Going?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

"I'll go, too," she told him. "Wait for me."

He had already spent practically all of his evening's amusement allowance; there would hardly be enough left to pay for a taxi, he reflected uncomfortably as he waited.

"I'm going to walk home," he said gruffly when she joined him.

"I'd like to walk," she said, and took his arm.

"Well," he addressed her in his thoughts, "you *shall* walk, if you come with me, whether you like it or not."

They walked a block through new-fallen and melting snow. He looked down unhappily at her

flimsy gold slippers. Her little feet would be getting wet.

That was the trouble. She looked so fragile and so defiantly brave in her fragility. One couldn't help wanting to cherish and protect her.

At the end of the block he gave in to his protective impulse and hailed a taxi.

Having done that, laid, as it were, profane hands on the sacred thirteen dollars and seventy cents that belonged to his art, he was lost. The taxi might be only seventy cents, but the thirteen dollars would follow it.

Sure enough, he discovered that he was hungry; and so, he found, was she. He redirected the taxi, and they stopped at an all-night restaurant, where they feasted on flapjacks and coffee. And in the royal and reckless mood induced by that feast, it appealed to him to tell the taxi-driver to drive around Central Park a little while.

Presently they were kissing shyly, and the taxi-driver drove them about the quiet roads of the park till dawn.

She had said she lived on Washington Square, but until the last moment he did not know that it was in the same house with himself. He gathered that she, too, was a beginning writer; a poet, it seemed. Trying to make a living at it, poor

child! She had come to Greenwich Village from some place in New England, and had been there on Washington Square all summer, and he, immersed in his novel, had never seen her. She had seen him, and wondered about him, she confessed. "This is my place," she said at the door of the little hall bedroom just above his. "Good night. It's been lovely!" And thus they had parted.

And now, walking along a lonely road on Staten Island, he resolved not to see her again—at least not until his year was up and his novel finished; certainly not now.

He might all too easily fall in love with such a girl, and that would be absurd. With a novel to write, he had no time for being in love.

It occurred to him that she might perhaps have taken their kisses too seriously: *she* might fall in love with *him*. Well, she would have to get over it then. He had a novel to write.

"Be hard!" Nietzsche had said that somewhere. He would not see that girl again.

That was settled. But that wasn't all: in his folly he had thrown away the equivalent of ten days of freedom. He might work all the harder to make up for those lost ten days, but he ought to penalize himself in some way, so as not to let this folly go unmarked.

He had drawn ten days' expenses in advance, and squandered them on a girl; very well, he

would go without money during those ten days. There were some emergency quarters in the little box by the gas-meter, so he would not have to freeze; and there was a little food in the house, so that he would not actually starve. A loaf of bread and a little butter, properly eked out with water, can last a long time. Besides, if he did go hungry for a day or two, it would only serve him right. If he was going to be hard, he had to be hard on himself as well as on—well, every one else.

So that was settled, too; and he turned abruptly in his walk along that lonely Staten Island road and started back toward the ferry.

Just then a little black kitten, hardly old enough to walk, came trudging out into the road from a by-path, and called to him, a faint and appealing mew.

"Cunning little thing!" he said, and knelt and petted it. The kitten rubbed its back gratefully against his hand. Then he rose and walked on again.

A tired kitten walks unsteadily on its little legs, and with an effort. He observed as much, glancing back. The kitten, he noted, was following him. That was too bad. He stopped and called:

"Go home, kitty! Go back home!"

But when he glanced about, there was no home

in sight from which the kitten might have strayed. He wondered what had happened. Perhaps a dog had chased it, and the sense of homeward, which even a young kitten possesses, had become confused. It was very tired, and it was following *him.*

"But you don't belong to me, kitty," he said.

The kitten toddled confidently toward him.

"Go back home, I tell you!" He made a handful of snow into a soft ball, and threw it, by way of dramatizing his meaning.

The kitten kept on. It did not know what kittens must learn, that the world of people is a harsh and cruel world. It did not recognize this as a hostile gesture; it still regarded him as a friend.

He was touched by this misplaced confidence, but, nevertheless, he made another snowball and threw it. This time the soft missile struck the kitten and tumbled it from its feet, but in a moment it was up again and coming toward him. It did not understand. He shook his head and gave up the attempt to educate the kitten. He simply walked on.

After a while he turned and looked, and there was the kitten, still following him. He paused, uncertain whether to argue the matter further. He decided it was no use, and went on.

But he kept looking back, and always there was

the kitten. If he stopped for a moment, it stopped, too, called to him faintly, and then hurried toward him, or tried to hurry; but it was so weary that it rocked from side to side as it walked, almost losing its balance.

It was absurd that this kitten should keep on following him. What right had it to behave as though it belonged to him? He had merely stopped for a moment to pet it. Kittens were silly things. He couldn't be bothered with them. He walked on.

But he couldn't help looking back to see if the kitten had become discouraged. No, there it was.

"You're *not* my kitten!" he cried.

And he walked very fast, and left the kitten out of sight around a bend in the road. Presently he came to the main traveled highway that led down to the ferry. A heavy truck plowed past, spattering muddy snow to each side. He thought:

"That silly kitten will be run over and killed if it comes here."

He waited, looking back, hoping that the kitten had had sense enough to turn and go home.

He waited three minutes, with his eyes fixed on the bend of the road. No kitten yet. Good! Even kittens could be made to understand that they weren't wanted. He congratulated himself upon his firmness. "Be hard!"—to kittens or

anything else that might interfere with his plans.

Just then, around the bend of the road came a little dot of black fur, wavering uncertainly against the background of muddy snow.

"Damn!" said the young Nietzschean, and went back and picked up the tired kitten and put it in his overcoat pocket, where it purred and went to sleep.

In his room he took the kitten from his pocket, and put it on his couch-bed.

"Cat," he said, "let us come to an understanding. It was you who insisted on coming with me. I did not ask you to come. I did not want a kitten. Remember that! It was all your doing. So don't complain if you do not like my establishment. I am a writer and a busy man. I have no time to play."

The kitten, refreshed by its sleep, rose and stretched itself, yawned, and then jumped to the floor.

"Listen to me, cat. I am a poor man. You could not have picked out a worse provider. Of course you are welcome to share with me what I have—"

Then he suddenly remembered his resolve—to live for the next ten days on what food there might be in the house as a punishment for last night's recklessness. He jumped up and went

to the little box outside the window where he kept his food.

Bread—a whole loaf, and half a pound of butter, virtually untouched, and plenty of coffee. But kittens do not drink coffee. They are usually fed on—

"Milk!" said the kitten.

"Yes, milk; I know," he replied. "But, unfortunately for you, there is no milk, and no money to buy milk with—for ten long days. Do you understand that? I promised to share with you what I had. I did not promise to give you whatever you asked for."

"Milk!" said the kitten, looking up at him trustfully.

"Cat," he said, "it is not true that I am poor; I'll be honest with you. I am rich. I have two hundred and eighty dollars right here on these premises. Think of all the milk I could buy for you with two hundred and eighty dollars! And fish—and liver—everything your little heart might desire! And if I were a regular human being, I'd go right out and buy you what you ask for. But that's where you've made your big mistake. I'm not a regular human being! I'm an artist. Do you know what an artist is like? Well, you'll find out if you stick around here. But I'm sorry for you, cat. A pint of milk costs only eight cents, but that eight cents will buy me

time and freedom in which to write twenty-nine words of my novel. You wouldn't think I could possibly care more for twenty-nine words than for a pretty little thing like you. But that's what artists are like—when they are really artists. If they are going to care more about other people than about their art, why, they might as well give up and go back to a job, and get married and support a wife like everybody else. You see, don't you, cat?" He cut two slices from the loaf, and crumbled one of them into a saucer of water. "I'm giving you just what I'm having myself," he said—"bread and water."

The kitten nosed the dish on the floor, sniffed disdainfully, and looked up at him.

"Milk!" it said impatiently.

There was a knock at the door. He hastily pushed the saucer out of sight under his gas-stove before opening.

The girl stood there.

"Hello!" she said.

"Oh—hello!" he replied. He did not ask her in. Instead, he waited with a look of severe inquiry, as if asking how she dared interrupt a busy man.

She missed this look, for she was gazing past him.

"What a darling little thing!" she cried, and then walked into his room.

She knelt and petted the kitten and then looked up.

"I think it's hungry," she said.

He frowned.

"Oh, do you think so?" he asked indifferently. What right had she to come in and criticize? It was none of *her* business if the kitten was hungry.

"Yes, I'm sure it is," she said, and rose. "Wait a minute, kitty!" and she ran out, and down the stairs.

She was going out into the cold without anything on her head; she ought not to do that. But, then, he reminded himself, that was none of *his* business.

He waited uneasily. At last she came back with a quart bottle of milk.

"It needs to be warmed," she said, lighting the gas, and pouring the milk into one of his saucepans, after mysteriously putting some of the creamy top-milk aside in a cup. She was making herself very much at home, he thought resentfully.

"You don't imagine that cat can drink a whole quart of milk?" he asked.

She laughed as though he had said something very funny.

"Do you like milk-toast?" she asked.

"Yes," he said unguardedly.

"So do I," she told him. "We'll have some,

shall we? You cut the bread and make the toast. Here, kitty, this is your share." She poured some of the warm milk into a saucer.

The kitten lapped it gratefully.

She was putting butter and pepper and salt into the saucepan, and had turned up the gas under it.

"Hurry with the toast!" she warned. "We'll make the coffee afterward."

He hurried.

The next evening she knocked on the door again, and this time she had a bottle of milk with her.

"How's the kitten?" she asked.

A kitten, he had discovered, was a nuisance to a busy writer. It climbed into his lap and purred noisily when he wanted to think; it jumped up on his writing-table and played with his pen while he tried to write. And it did no good to scold a kitten; it could not take him seriously. It regarded everything from its own point of view. It chose his pile of manuscript to go to sleep on in the daytime, and at night it awoke, after he was in bed, and played, leaping from the table to his bed and walking over his face.

But all he said was:

"Oh, the kitten's all right."

"Milk?" said the kitten, speaking for itself.

"Yes, here's your milk," she said.

Again she made milk-toast and coffee for the two of them. This time the other half of his loaf of bread was used up. He said to himself, "Well, there will be no more milk-toast, anyway."

But the third evening she appeared with a bottle of milk under one arm and a loaf of bread under the other.

He began to have a horrid suspicion. Had he eaten too ravenously of that milk-toast? Did she know he was hungry? Did she perhaps think he was too poor to buy himself food? Was she making the kitten an excuse for—yes, for feeding *him?*

These hateful surmises made him surly, but she did not seem to mind. And when she lingered that evening after their dinner, and talked about writing in a way that showed she understood something of an artist's difficulties, he could not but become friendly. When she bade him good night she was so sweet that he forgot his resolutions, and stooped to kiss her. She flung her arms about him and passionately returned his kiss, then disengaged herself and ran from the room.

This would not do; he must not keep this up. To-morrow he would not be here when she came, or he would lock the door and pretend not to be

here; she could think what she liked. Let her think him a cad! Artists had to be cads sometimes.

He locked the door the next evening and waited. He heard her light step coming downstairs from the room above. He heard the front door close. Again he waited. He heard the front door open and close many times as various people came in, then her quick step on the stairs. He held his breath. She had reached the landing, she was coming toward his door. Be firm now!

"Miss Glory!" It was the landlady's querulous voice from the other end of the hall.

"Yes?" June Glory's voice sounded a little anxious.

"I'm sorry, but I'll have to ask you for that rent. I can't wait any longer."

There was a pause.

"I'll give it to you to-morrow." The girl's tone was cool, but there was a tinge of desperation in it.

"Well, see that you do, then. To-morrow is the last day, mind you. I'm a poor woman myself, and I can't have people staying in my rooms for nothing. I've not asked the rent from you in advance,—you know that,— But here it is the fifth of November, and I've got to have my October rent. There's been two people I've turned away already—"

"Please! You shall have the rent to-morrow," said June in a low tone.

"All right; to-morrow noon at the latest!" and the landlady clumped down the stairs.

The young man listening behind the door silently shifted the bolt. The girl's steps turned slowly away from his door toward the stairs that led to her room. He flung open the door.

She looked at him and flamed red.

"Come here!" he said.

She came slowly, and he shut the door behind her.

"You heard?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I'm sorry." She laid her parcels on the table, and stood there, looking as though she had done something to be ashamed of.

"How much is it?" he demanded.

She straightened her little shoulders and looked at him calmly.

"None of your business," she said.

"Well—it's probably eight dollars, the same as mine," he said, and went to his secret and sacred hoard. He came back with a bill. "Here!" he said roughly.

She put her hands behind her back.

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"I can't."

"What will you do to-morrow?"

"There may be a check—from one of the magazines."

"And if there shouldn't?" he pursued relentlessly.

"I don't care!"

"Silly girl!" he said. "Take this, damn you!" and he forced it into one of her clenched hands.

Then she burst out crying.

"What's the matter now?" he asked. "Are you so conventional-minded as all that?"

She stopped crying, and looked at him scornfully.

"No, but you are!" she said.

"You mean," he cried indignantly, "that just because of this, I'll think I've the—the right to make love to you? I assure you—"

"That's just it," she said. "You'll think that just because of this, you—haven't the right to any more!"

He stepped back, overwhelmed.

"Men are so stupid," she said.

The kitten broke the tense silence.

"Milk?" it said.

They were very happy.

He was playing for the first time in his life with a wonderful playmate. They went to the theater, they danced, they dined in gilded cafés. With her

he entered a strange, unfamiliar world and made new friends. Every evening with her he threw away a week's precious freedom. And he did not care.

They played through November and December. On New Year's eve he took from his hiding-place the last of his money.

"I've just twenty dollars left in the world," he told her. "Come, and let's spend it together."

"Is that true?" she asked soberly.

He had told her about himself; she knew that he had saved up some money, but she didn't know how little. Money was a subject on which she was very vague. She had had so little that it intoxicated her to help spend it; nevertheless, she had remembered to protest from time to time, which had only made him angry.

"You've been very reckless," she said reprovingly now.

"Would you like me better if I were very sensible?" he asked.

"No," she said and sighed. "I seem to like reckless people."

"I'm glad you do."

"But—I'd like to be reckless, too," she said. "I got my first check for a poem to-day. It's only ten dollars. But let's put it with yours and spend it!" Her eyes brightened with excitement.

"No," he begged, "let this be my party."

"All right, then," she said. "I'll save it for bread and milk. I sha'n't mind going back to our milk-toast parties again. Shall you? But too bad the kitten won't be here to share them."

For the kitten, now that there was no novel-writing to interfere with, had left him, and, as he learned after making inquiries, had found a home in another house on the square. There was no accounting for the whims of a kitten.

"Do you love me?" he asked.

"What do you think?" She kissed him.

"I think perhaps you do."

"But what are your plans?" she asked. "I wish *I* could stake you while you finish your novel," she added wistfully.

"I'll tell you my plans," he promised, "on the stroke of midnight."

They started out to the old year's jocund funeral.

It wanted five minutes of twelve. They were at a table in a noisy café. As the hour approached that would bring in the new year they became silent.

"In five minutes," he said to himself.

And, as though the matter were not already decided in his own mind, he went over the whole question again.

"I suppose I'm not the stuff of which real

artists are made," he thought. Oh, he would manage somehow to finish that novel—or a better one. He hadn't known very much about life when he planned that one. Fate wasn't as grim as he had thought. And love was sweeter.

"Well," he said to himself, "I'll take that job, anyway."

That job was one he had been offered by some of his new friends; it was on a magazine. It was a better job than he had ever dreamed of having. If he wanted to, he could save up his money and buy years of freedom to write. Or, on the other hand—

"That," he mused, "is the question." And he frowned as he pondered it. If he married, he wouldn't be able to save up to write. He would have to think first of his wife always. And then there would be babies. He would have to give up his freedom.

"But I don't mind," he thought. "That's the odd thing about it. As an artist, I ought to mind. When an artist marries, he is simply taking money that belongs to his art and spending it on a girl—and her babies. And yet my friends will congratulate me. They'll think I am doing a fine thing. If I were a bank cashier and betrayed my trust in order to spend money on a girl, they wouldn't congratulate me. They'd put me in jail. But *I* shall be considered a good citizen.

"It's funny," he thought. "I can see it all so clearly. And yet I don't care. So I suppose I'm not really an artist at all. I'm just human—and a man. I can't bear to think of that girl ever going hungry, waiting for a check from some damned magazine. Oh, I shall be happy, working for her. But I *ought* to be ashamed of myself!"

There was a hush throughout the café, and then the noise of horns and bells burst in from the outside. People stood on chairs and lifted their glasses and laughed and sang and cheered.

"Now tell me what's on your mind," said the girl, leaning forward so as to be heard above the din.

He took both her hands in his and told her his plans and asked her to marry him.

"Oh!" she said, and tears came into her eyes. "But—but I can't!"

"Why not?"

"Because."

"You love me, don't you, dear?"

"Yes; but I don't want to be your wife. I don't want to be anybody's wife. I want to write poetry."

"You want—"

"Yes, of course. That must come first always. And so I mustn't try to be a wife to any one. It's terribly nice of you to want me to be, Paul. And what you say is true. It would be pleasant

to be taken care of, and all that; but I'll have to take my chances. Oh, I know I would be happy, being your wife. It's just that I'm most afraid of! Don't you see?"

"Oh!" he said.

"I'm sorry, dear," she said, pressing his hand in hers. "It's been so lovely, all of it; but—I thought you understood!"

All this happened several years ago in Greenwich Village, when rents were low and artists and writers lived there happy in their poverty and youth, scornful of the great world, disdaining its wisdom, and finding for themselves in kisses and tears a wisdom of their own. Here, and in such a manner, were begun two careers, the further developments of which are sufficiently set forth in the pages of Who's Who.

Let her that is of love afraid
Venture not into the shade
Of this dusk wood, the tangles dark
And secret glades of Cupid's Park;
Turn her timid steps away,
Nor disturb the laughing play
Of those that keep love's holiday.

Only she may enter here
Whose happy fancy laughs at fear,
Only she whose generous flame
Burns away the thought of shame;
But welcome to this trysting place
That lovely girl whose laughing face
Can lend delight its own sweet grace.

Here let her number joys until
Arithmetic's amazed, and fill
Her lap with pleasures as with flowers,
Kissing out the golden hours,
Till the hours are kissed to sleep,
And the stars her secrets keep
In a golden slumber deep.

Waking, she shall wake to gladness,
Never any pang of sadness
Or regret shall bitter-mingle
With the morning joys that tingle
At her dewy lips— Oh, never
Shall she rue her sweet endeavor,
But be glad of it forever.

—Imitated from an Elizabethan song.

II. Phantom Adventure

The sunny loveliness of trees in flower
Some day perhaps shall lure me as of old;
But now the blossoms of your garden-bower,
That never drew their sustenance from the mold,
So haunt me that I do not even lift
My eyes to look, walking the orchard through:
Cherry-bloom, apple-bloom—all the season's gift
Is worthless in my eyes because of you,
Who lit three candles on a windy night
And hung them like three blossoms in a tree—
Three frost-flowers each with icy stalactite
Drip-dripping into darkness. . . . Foolish me,
That in my petal-dripping orchard-close
Must shut my eyes and think of flowers like those!

Phantom Adventure

HE was not a banker by temperament. But nobody in New York, nobody east of the Rockies, knew that. It was his secret.

When he graduated from college, instead of preparing himself seriously for life by cleaning the ink-wells in some Wall Street institution, as an ambitious young man should, he got a job on a Western ranch. He did this for no better reason than that he had been fond of reading about cowboys. He learned many things about horses and cattle, and made friends with every cowboy within a hundred miles. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied; for cowboy life, while interesting enough in fact, is less romantically adventurous than in fiction. Yet he stayed there for five years, dreaming now of the sea and reading stories of sailor adventures.

Then an uncle died, leaving him a legacy of a little more than five thousand dollars. With five thousand dollars a young man could get started in business, and it was high time for him to do so. He went to San Francisco and looked about for an opening.

In a café he met a man who had just come back from incredible adventures in the South Seas. To this man's tales he listened all evening, and then went back to his lodging, where he could not sleep, but walked back and forth for hours in a little garden, dreaming, awake, of strange birds and strange trees and slim, brown, laughing girls with flowers in their hair.

Next morning he went down to the waterfront, and looked out thoughtfully in the direction of the South Seas. With his five thousand dollars he could buy or build a little boat and, with some congenial companion, set sail for those islands of incredible adventure. But he knew that this was mere romantic folly, more worthy of a boy than of a man. He must begin to take life seriously. He shook his head and frowned, and went on to the café.

Every morning—sometimes it was noon—for a whole year he went down to the waterfront and looked out over the bay. And every afternoon and evening he sat in some café. At the end of the year he had made many friends and heard many curious tales, and his money was all gone.

He began to look for a job. He had an extensive convivial acquaintance among the business men of the town; but they did not seem to have any job for him, though they were willing to lend him a few dollars.

So he borrowed a little money and came to New York, where no one knew, as he expressed it, what a damn fool he was.

He took care that no one should know. He got a job in a Fifth Avenue bank, and when he was barely forty he was one of its vice-presidents. He had an apartment in town and a house in the country and a car and a wife and four lovely children, and he was proud of them all.

He was proud of being a sober and responsible citizen—proud of having conquered his romantic propensities. Perhaps his children knew, from the wild, half-true and half-imagined tales he told them at their bedtime hours, that he was still at heart a romantic adventurer. But nobody else, and least of all his sweet and sensible wife, suspected his secret.

In the summer of his fortieth year the town apartment had been closed, and his wife and children were in the country. He himself was going to the country in a day or two, as soon as he had cleared up those matters, whatever they are, that keep bankers in town in August. He stayed at his club until one evening on an impulse he went down to an out-of-the-way little street near Washington Square, in the hope of hearing some talk from a man who lived there, and whom he had been thinking of at intervals all day.

He was thinking of this man because he had read the night before, at the club, a story of his in a magazine. This man was a writer of stories and lived in what was called Greenwich Village; and this particular story was one of romantic adventure in the South Seas. The story-writer's wife and the banker's wife had been friends from girlhood, and the story-writer and the banker were acquaintances of a sort. The banker was always a little aware in the other's presence of his own secret and foolish past. He was embarrassed when he talked of financial conditions by a fear and perhaps also a hope that the other would somehow see through him. Also he kept wondering if a writer imagined all his romantic adventures or if some of them had really happened. He particularly wondered this about the story he had read the night before at the club, for it gave such a vivid description of a South Sea island that it seemed as though it could only have been written by one who had lived there.

The story-writer was at home. His wife, he explained, was at the seashore with the children, and he was staying in town to do a story or two to pay their summer bills. He sat down again in his study, cocking up his feet on the typewriter desk and lighting a fresh cigarette.

"No, you're not interrupting me," he said. "Don't worry about that. I never get started to

work till after midnight, and I want somebody to talk to while this new South Sea yarn ferments in my head. Have a cigarette." He started to talk. Again the banker had the feeling of guarding a secret.

It was nearly midnight when the conversation took a turn that promised to satisfy the banker's curiosities.

"It's odd," said the story-writer, and paused. "It's very odd. I'm supposed to be a respectable citizen. But consider these stories of mine. The hero, who is me, meets a beautiful girl and falls in love with her. Sometimes she is a princess, sometimes a chorus girl; just now she is usually a dusky maiden with flowers in her hair. I suppose I've met and made love to more than a hundred girls in the course of my literary career. To be sure, I always ask them to marry me; but I never tell them of all the other beautiful heroines I have loved and left behind me. And yet nobody thinks I'm a scoundrel. Not even my wife!"

"Of course not," said the banker. "That would be absurd."

"Yes, it would be unthinkable," said the story-writer. "For when I have finished one of my adventures, I mail it to an editor and get a check for it. And that's exactly why my wife doesn't object. It pays the rent; and so it's perfectly all right for me to spend my life in extra-matri-

monial love scenes. But why do I get paid for these adventures?" he went on meditatively. "Because people want adventures. When a man reads one of my romantic yarns, *he* becomes the hero, *he* makes love to beautiful, strange girls. And yet no one has thought of proposing laws to forbid married men to read love-stories."

"After all," said the banker, ironically, "there is a slight difference between reading a love adventure and going out and having one."

"No," said the story-writer; "the difference is not slight; it is considerable. But just what is that difference? A love adventure in story form is guaranteed to be complete in itself, to be over when it is finished, and to leave behind it nothing but a pleasant memory in the reader's mind. In all these ways it differs from a love adventure in reality, concerning which no such safe guarantees can be offered. We try to live orderly lives, and while the love adventures of reality may upset the well-considered plans of a lifetime, the other kind leaves everything exactly as it was. The heroine may swoon with ecstasy in your arms to-night; but she will not call you up on the telephone in the morning or write you passionate and compromising letters."

"Poor girl—she can't!" said the banker.

"She doesn't want to. It is only women of the real world who want love to be a part of life.

She belongs to the world of romance, which has laws of its own."

"The world of fancy," said the banker.

"Don't pretend to despise the world of fancy," said the story-writer. "Fond as we are of the real world, it is far from satisfying all our demands. It is too inexorable. The phantom world of fancy is in many respects a more agreeable place. And everybody goes to it for solace. The sober triumphs of reality are never able for long to satisfy us; always we turn from those four-square actualities to live for a delightful hour in that extravagant land where our most impossible wishes can come true. It is a need of our human nature."

"Oh, no doubt," said the banker. "But nevertheless—"

The story-teller interrupted him.

"Have you thought of this? That the self which goes out adventuring in the land of fancy is not a part of this real life of ours at all? It is a kind of phantom, existing joyously and irresponsibly in a phantom world."

"I hadn't thought of it just like that," said the banker, reflectively.

"But here is the real question. These adventurers in the phantom realm of fancy, *why do they never meet?*"

The banker stared.

"I'm not sure that I understand you."

"Suppose a man and a girl, unknown to each other, reading the same story at the same time; their phantom selves are sharing the same adventure, one that some writer has created for them. But suppose they dispense with the writer's assistance. Suppose these phantom selves should meet and create their own adventure. Why not?"

The banker stirred uneasily in his chair.

The story-writer laughed.

"It might happen."

"It might," said the banker.

"I wonder," said the story-writer, "what my wife would say if I told her of such an adventure. It would be like all my other adventures, more beautiful, perhaps, than any of the others. And yet—"

"I hope," said the banker, frowning, "that you—"

"Go to bed," said the story-writer, suddenly. "You'll find the guest-room on the top floor. I'm going to get to work on my South Sea story. I'll wake you up for coffee in the morning."

He took his feet down from the typewriter desk and threw away his cigarette. His hands hovered over the keyboard, and already he had forgotten the outer world, including his guest, who rose and wandered uncertainly from the room.

He found the guest-room upstairs. But whether it was the faint clicking of the typewriter below that disturbed him, or his own thoughts, he was disinclined to sleep.

There was a pile of magazines on the table, and he began to read a story. It was the kind of story he had been fond of all his life, an adventure and a strange meeting with a beautiful girl.

But he let the magazine slip to the floor. He was thinking of old times in San Francisco. He remembered that he had wanted to build a boat and sail to the South Seas.

"But I didn't!" he said to himself triumphantly.

No,—a mocking thought came to remind him,—he had stayed on shore and listened to café yarns.

But since then he had been sensible. He had been sensible for twelve years. Twelve years! In a sudden panic he wondered if his youth had slipped by and vanished with those years. He went over and gazed at himself in the mirror. He saw a man in the prime of life, strong and clear-eyed.

He did not want to go to bed; but perhaps a walk to the club would make him sleepy. He debated whether to disturb the man at work below to tell him, and decided he would not. He went downstairs quietly.

On the second floor he looked out to reassure himself as to the weather. The sky was a little cloudy, that was all. And then, as he stood there looking out of the hall window, he saw below him a little garden in the moonlight. He looked away quickly, but not in time, for he remembered a moonlit garden perched on one of the hills of San Francisco, where as a young man he had walked night after night dreaming impossible things. That memory was painful, and he hurried downstairs and took his hat to leave the house. But the pain of that memory was strangely sweet, and afflicted him with a kind of nostalgia. He wanted to go out into this garden and be again the young fool he had been. He walked up and down the hall with his hat in his hand, wanting to go away and wanting to stay and dream in this garden. It was a queer thing. He had stopped drinking, and he had stopped dreaming, years ago; the desire for drink had never come back, but the desire for dreaming was upon him again. He felt that his whole life of triumphant common sense was at stake. But no, it couldn't be. An hour in a moonlit garden could not undo the solid achievement of twelve years. He put his hat back on the stand. With a guilty sense of having yielded to a weakness, he went quietly out, past the door from behind

which came the inspired click of typewriter keys fashioning some strange adventure.

In the garden he stood and looked about. There was a full moon above, dimmed with clouds and casting that half-light which transforms the accustomed world into the realm of fancy. *On such a night as this—* Odd bits of poetry, remembered from his youth, came into his mind.

Across from where he stood was a high board fence, and in it a gate, painted ivory-white. He had an impulse to go over and open it. But instead he stood still, mockingly analyzing that impulse. "In a story," he said to himself, "there would be an adventure waiting in the next garden. But in real life, as I well know, there is only another garden, like this, with no one there. People do not moon about in gardens."

But then he reflected, "I am mooning about in a garden." Realizing that bankers do not do such things, it seemed to him that he was not a banker, but, as his friend had said, a phantom in a phantom world where impossible things come true.

He surrendered himself for a moment to this feeling, and began to think foolish thoughts, such as he had not thought for twelve years.

"What if there should be an adventure waiting

for me on the other side of that gate? What if there were a girl in that garden, waiting?" These thoughts were frightening, and nevertheless they made him happy.

Then his common sense reasserted itself. There was nothing in that other garden, and he was being a damn fool. He reflected gratefully that no one would ever know what a damn fool he was. The depositors at the bank could never guess, nor could his wife. And since there was nothing on the other side of the gate, he might as well go and open it and look into the garden, and then go back to bed.

He walked over to the gate, and there he paused. Why trouble himself to prove what he already knew? Why not keep intact the memory of this absurd fancy and have the pleasure of thinking that perhaps, after all, there had been an adventure waiting beyond that gate?

He realized that if he opened the gate and nothing happened, it would hurt. He put his hand on the latch in a mood curiously like the mood of prayer. If he had had a God to whom such a prayer could be addressed, he might have prayed that just this once— But his was no pagan deity, and so he did not pray. Lacking the courage that prayer sometimes gives, he took his hand from the latch.

Then he remembered how he had gone down to

the waterfront every morning and looked out over the bay and never set sail for the islands of romance; and he felt that this was a test. It didn't make any difference what happened: he couldn't turn back.

He pushed open the gate softly.

Seated on a little wooden bench was a girl; her face was turned away from him, but he could see the languid sweep of a slender arm, bare and beautiful.

One last reminder of his ordinary self intruded into his mind, the façade of the bank on Fifth Avenue, symbol of twelve years of sturdy effort in the realm of common sense. But it seemed to have no relation whatever to this moment, and it faded and was gone.

He stood looking at the girl for the space of a breath; then he walked over to her through a tangle of moonlight that broke through the branches of an elm.

The milk-wagons were rattling over the streets when he went back through the ivory gate, and he could hear the typewriter still clattering within the house. He went silently to the guest-room, undressed, and flung himself on the bed. The adventure was over, and now he had to think about its relation to actuality. But he did not think; he fell asleep.

At the bank there were other matters to occupy his mind. On the train to the country that afternoon there was a neighbor who talked about financial conditions. At the end of the ride there was his wife's welcome and the children climbing into his arms. It wasn't until after dinner that he had any time to think.

He was rather surprised at his thoughts. They were, first of all, thoughts of relief at being back at home. It was as if he had strayed for a few hours out of time and space, and was happy to find himself again safely within the cozy contours of the familiar. He was glad to be back in a world that had a meaning beyond the moment, a world that reached back in memory and forward in hope, the world of reality.

As a happy citizen of this comfortable world, he was naturally concerned with the inquiry whether his position in it had been endangered by last night's adventure. And it seemed to him that he need have no fear. That adventure was a thing utterly apart from all the rest of his life—a thing complete and perfect in itself, with no sequel to be feared or hoped for; they did not even know each other's names. She herself had preferred that it should be so.

"And," she had said, "you needn't fear that it will ever be made commonplace by our meeting

at a tea somewhere; you will never see me again." And he had said, laughing:

"You speak as though you were going to die or going on a very long journey!"

"Yes," she said; "something like that. You mustn't ask me about it, only take my word for it."

And he strangely believed her. Why, he did not know. But to-day he was glad to be so sure that their adventure was ended and that no one but themselves could ever know about it. He had left his friend and gone up to bed; he had sat down to read a magazine before he went to sleep; and in the morning he had been awakened for coffee. Over the coffee he had asked:

"Who lives in the little white house next door, a writer?" and was told, "A school-teacher, I believe." Evidently his friend did not know of the school-teacher's guest. No; so far as all the world was concerned, there had been no midnight adventure. It was as detached from reality, as immaterial from any common sense point of view, as if it had been merely a story he had read in a magazine that night. He might, if he wished, think of it as that.

He was a little startled, as by an odd coincidence, when his wife asked: "Shall I read you a story? The new magazines have come." But really it was no coincidence at all, for she knew

that he liked magazine stories and enjoyed being read to in the evenings. The thing had happened many times before; nevertheless, it was a little strange to be listening to such a story, while in and out of his mind there flashed bright memories of another story.

"Why always the South Seas, I wonder?" his wife paused to remark, looking up from the big chair where she sat with the magazine in her lap. "I suppose it *is* a more romantic place."

"Yes, perhaps," he said.

He had talked to that girl last night about the South Seas; he had said he would like to take her there to see the strange birds and flowers. And she had told him about Venice. And while they talked of sail-boats and gondolas, they were sitting on a garden bench in Greenwich Village.

"He gets the romantic atmosphere rather well, doesn't he?" said his wife. "I think I can guess which one of the girls he is going to fall in love with, the one with the red hibiscus flower in her hair. What do you think?"

"Very likely," he agreed.

Who was she, the girl of last night's story? He couldn't guess. She wasn't young, as girls in stories are; there were even tragic lines marring the beauty of what had been a lovely face. But her eyes were incredibly young—the eyes of a child, full of wild dreams. Perhaps, in her ordi-

nary life, she was some one quite different from what she had been that night—as different as he had been from his ordinary self. None of his friends would have recognized *him* as the romantic wanderer whom she had held for a moment in her arms. He had even quoted poetry to her. *On such a night as this*— Well, he didn't care; it had not been sham. It was another part of himself. And she? It did not matter what she was to her friends. Last night she had been his strange and lovely playmate.

His wife looked up from the magazine.

"A little improbable, don't you think?"

Many things were improbable, he reflected. That room last night, with its flowers and tall candles.

"This isn't my place, you know," she had said. "Shall I tell you the story? It belongs to a school-teacher, a queer little old-maidish person one would have thought if one had seen her in her school-room, no doubt. She invested all her savings in oil stock; and contrary to what you might expect, she made a fortune,—oh, just a little fortune, but enough to last *her* for the rest of her life. And she bought this house in Greenwich Village, and fitted up this room as a place for romantic things to happen in. But nothing romantic happened. So yesterday, when we met,—she was going away on a visit, and I was in town

for a day and a night, on my way somewhere else,—well, we became very quickly acquainted, and she wanted me to stay here. I was thinking of her when you walked into her garden to-night. Shall I tell you? I think that she believed *I* was the sort of person to whom romantic things do happen, and that if I were here, this room of hers would fulfill its destiny. Is it shameless of me to tell you that?"

"It's beautiful of you to tell me that," and he took her in his arms, no longer wondering how this adventure would end.

"I don't like her." It was his wife, speaking of the heroine of the story she was reading.

"Why not?"

"She isn't real."

He looked at his wife. She was real. And that was better than being the phantom creature of a lovely moment. Why should she begrudge the other kind of girl her moment?

It was odd; he wasn't in the least ashamed. Men, he remembered, sometimes had bad consciences over things like this, they were driven to confession by remorse. But he had nothing to be sorry for. Why should he confess?

His wife laid the magazine aside a little petulantly.

"Oh, well," she said, "it's just a story."

"Yes," he said absently, "just a story."

It was a fortnight before he went back to town. That evening he invited his friend the story-writer to dinner, and they talked. And as it seemed by accident, their talk touched upon the subject of neighbors.

"Is Greenwich Village any different in that way from uptown? Do you know your school-teacher neighbor in the little white house next door, for instance?" Surely, he thought, it could not be rash to ask that. Certainly his friend would not suspect him of a personal interest in an old-maid school-teacher. So he was thinking when he heard, "She died there to-day."

Afterward he could hardly believe what had happened, except that a wild conviction came into his mind, whirling him out of his chair, out of the restaurant. He wandered somewhere, with one thought in his mind:

He must see that dead face.

Then he found himself in a house, in that house, among a fluttered group of school-teachers who talked to him about the woman who had died. They took him for one of her family. He did not talk to them. He went up a stairway and into a room with faded flowers and tall candles ranged about a high bed like an altar. A dead woman lay there, with a sheet drawn over her face. He lifted the cloth and looked at her face and went away silently.

It was queer, he knew, this impulse to confess that haunted him day and night. When she had been alive he had never wished to speak the words that might set him free to seek again the strange solace of her lips and arms. But now that she was forever out of reach, he felt this mad compulsion to make known their shadowy love.

To speak now would be to risk losing all the happiness he had built up for himself in the real world, out of an inexplicable loyalty to the memory of his dead playmate. But he could not think of such things now. He could think only of the dreamer who had decked a room for a beautiful adventure that did not come, and who sat in a garden waiting, wondering whether death would come before the adventure; and of a gate that swung open one moonlit night to make her dream come true, and of two adventurers happy for an uncalendared hour in the phantom world of fancy. The time would come, his reason urged, when this memory would be a thing remote and forgotten, when it would no longer hold for him even the ache of regret, when its pathos even would be faded, as its bright joys were already fading in his thoughts. He would be sorry to have spoken. He would know that he had been a fool to speak. But now, though he lost everything that would one day be dear to him again, he did not care.

He fought against that mad impulse while he could. Then, lest he blurt the thing out suddenly, he began to plan the manner of his confession.

He remembered a fantastic idea uttered that night by the story-writer and he thought, "It will be easier to tell it to her first as a story."

And one evening he told her the story.

He began haltingly enough, constrained as he was to present to her imagination these two nameless figures of a man and a woman who had wished rashly for a happiness not to be had within the solid confines of reality; but as he talked, he forgot all else, and his confession became a passionate vindication of the rights of that phantom self for which the workaday world has so little use, and which can achieve only a pitiful and momentary freedom in what the world calls folly. Then, for he had come to the end of his tale, in that picture of a room with its faded flowers and spent candles and a face whose eyes were no longer bright with wild dreams, abruptly he ceased speaking. And it seemed to him that even without as yet naming himself, he had confessed his crime of secret rebellion against the wisdom of the world.

He looked up and saw that there were tears in his wife's eyes.

"It's true," she said. "Women do feel like that."

He was bewildered.

"All women," she went on. "But I didn't think men knew. How *did* you know?"

He was about to tell her how he knew, when she spoke again, softly.

"I'm glad she found so beautiful a lover."

Then he was ashamed, of what, he hardly knew, unless it was of what he seemed to his wife. He realized that he was to her merely what he had labored for twelve years to seem to all the world. Not the foolish adventurer of his tale; no, she could never believe that. He imagined how it would sound to her if he pretended to be that man in the story. It would be the strangest argument in the annals of marriage. He could prove nothing; his secret was fatally secure. She would say, "You have dreamed it, dear."

And seeing himself with her eyes, he was shaken by a doubt. Perhaps it *had* been just a dream.

But presently a thought of bitter comfort came; he would tell his friend the story-writer, who would do what was after all the only sensible thing to do with a dream in this world, sell it to other dreamers.

And after a time that was what happened.

III. The Button

Morning sun and morning shadow
In the green valley that dips to the meadow.
A cry of delight from the hidden pool—
A splash in those clear depths mountain cool,
Some one laughing, and between the trees
The dancing glimmer of white knees:
Startled and fearless, a girl at play.
Let the swift hours their flight delay!
Her lips are cool as a dewy blossom.
Who shall stir the peace of that unstirred bosom?
Cool hands and laughing mouth,
Gifts of her unconscious youth—
A prize for him who gayly dares:
And what's to come, who knows, who cares?

The Button

BARBARA LOCKE had been what every one called a high-spirited girl. Even as a child, she had quarreled—over nothing at all—with her dearest friend and playmate of years, and never made up with him. The nothing at all over which they quarreled was as to whose yard they should play in that afternoon, his or hers.

In the co-educational college she attended, she was the first girl to be elected editor of the college paper. Her graduating essay was on "Woman's Place in the World."

She wanted to go to New York and get a job on a magazine. And when her parents objected she borrowed the money from a sympathetic old-maid aunt and went anyway. She was not quite twenty-one years old.

On the train from the Middle West to New York she became acquainted with a big, helpless-looking black-haired youth. They told each other their names. His was Henry Riggs. He too was on his way to New York to make his fame and fortune. The excitement of their common adventure drew them together, and they were good

friends by the time they had reached the end of their journey.

He was concerned about her safety in the great strange city, and wanted her to go to a Y.W.C.A. But she laughed at him. She was going first to the Brevoort Hotel, and then look for a room in Greenwich Village. She intended to become acquainted with the writers and artists there.

He was wistfully impressed by her daring ambitions. He himself had no such romantic hopes. He thought he would make a good salesman. He had sold one thing and another in his summer vacations to pay his way through college. And he wanted to be in New York, because that was where big things were going on. He was twenty-two years old.

After she had left him at the subway entrance—for she firmly refused his well-meant offer to see her to her hotel—she wondered what she liked about him. His bigness, his helplessness, and his black hair had somehow appealed to her. But he was in all other respects like thousands of other young men. There was nothing extraordinary about him. He would have a harder time getting along in New York than she would. She was a little sorry for him.

Perhaps that was why she had agreed to have dinner with him on Thursday. He was to call for her at the hotel at seven.

By the time he came, she had found a furnished room into which she would move to-morrow. She had also discovered a nice little restaurant in the Village, and she proposed that they go there for dinner.

"Why not here at the Brevoort?" he asked. She knew that he didn't have much money, and she suspected that he had eaten in armchair lunch-rooms in the intervals of his search for a job; and she smiled at the folly of masculine pride.

"Wait till we've landed some work," she said. And she insisted on sharing the check between them. He demurred at that, but at last gave in, explaining shamefacedly that he had had his pocket picked the day before, so that he had lost about half of his small store of money. Inwardly she remembered with some malicious satisfaction his anxiety as to her ability to take care of herself in this great, strange city. She said nothing of that, however, but offered to lend him some money. He flatly refused the offer, and even seemed a little hurt and angry. So that she had to agree, for the sake of his pride, to another dinner engagement the following evening.

They continued to dine together frequently during the next weeks and months; and because he suffered so in letting her pay half of the check she let him pay it all, when they went out to a restaurant; but she could manage a little cooking

in her room, and so she invited him there most of the time.

One evening he came to her place glowing with triumph. He had a job with an automobile company. He was so happy that she did not tell him that she, too, had a job in prospect. She felt that that would dim his triumph.

When he drew his commission on his first month's work, he insisted on taking her to that dinner at the Brevoort. Then she did mention casually that she had begun to work for a magazine.

Through dinner she wondered why she should like this helpless boy. And it was with no forewarning at all, later in the evening, that she found herself profoundly disturbed by the question of whether she would marry him. It began, simply enough, with a kiss in Central Park; and then he proposed to her while she was still shaken by that kiss. She had kissed boys before, but those kisses had meant nothing. This one melted her, it seemed, as a rock is melted; but still she was only astonished at this sudden weakness, until he asked her to marry him. She was dismayed; for that question interpreted her emotions to her, and some newly awakened wish in her mind wanted to reply yes. She shut her lips against that word. "Oh, I don't know!" she said tormentedly. "Wait, dear—don't ask me now!" . . . Then,

with that respite gained, there seemed to be no reason why she should not let him kiss her again.

Afterward, she remembered saying she loved him. But now, safely away from him, she desperately hoped not. She evaded him for a week. And during that week she thought of nothing, day and night, except him—his bigness and helplessness and his black hair, and his arms around her, and his kisses on her mouth. Nothing else seemed to matter. . . .

Within a month they were married.

She had always liked her name—Barbara Locke. In imagination she had seen it featured on the covers of magazines. She had intended to make that name famous. But now, without a demur, she became Mrs. Riggs. She felt secretly proud of being Mrs. Riggs. And that was odd, because the name Riggs meant nothing—yet. Of course, he wouldn't be doing this kind of work for long; it was just an opening for him. Meanwhile she went on working; they needed the money she earned, even if it was only a little, and she enjoyed being really his helpmate. But when he was called to New Jersey, of course she had to go along, and she left the magazine.

He had worked up rapidly, and in a little more than three years he was given the position of assistant manager of the New Jersey branch. It was a wonderful opportunity, and she was very

happy about it. They lived now in a pretty New Jersey suburb, and had a car. Every morning she drove him down to the station to catch his train, and every evening she went down to the station to drive him home.

Another year passed.

And then one morning when Henry had just put on a shirt he took it off again, and threw it violently on the floor.

"What's the matter, dear?" she asked anxiously. "That shirt just came from the laundry yesterday—I put it in your bureau drawer myself."

"The damn thing has a button off the front," he said fretfully. "I don't see why I can't have my buttons sewed on! It isn't as though you had anything else to do."

Barbara sat still, looking at the pattern on the wall paper. She did not answer Henry's contrite "Good-by!" She sat there until she heard the front gate click; and then she rose and went into her own room. From a closet she rummaged out an old suitcase with the initials "B. L." on it, and from the garret her portable typewriter, long disused. Then she began packing her clothes, choosing carefully. When she had finished, and dressed herself in an old tailored suit, she took

her suitcase in one hand and her portable typewriter in the other and went out.

"I'm through," she said to herself, and caught the car for the station, where she bought a ticket for New York.

She went to the Brevoort, registered as Barbara Locke, and went out to look for a furnished room in Greenwich Village.

She had looked at and decided against several places to live, when she turned a corner and found herself a few steps from the house where she had lived nearly five years ago. There was a "room for rent" sign out, and she smiled, wondering if her old room were empty. She rang, and a young woman answered the bell. "Is Mrs. Casey here?" Barbara asked. It would be good to see her old landlady again.

"Mrs. Casey's out," said the girl. "But I'm her daughter."

Mrs. Casey, Barbara knew, had a daughter; but this was the first time Barbara had ever seen her. She had heard Mrs. Casey tell more than once of Sarah Ellen and her troubles with her husband Jim. So this was Sarah Ellen! She had seemed, five years ago, in Barbara's mind, to constitute a good argument against marriage—an argument, however, which Barbara had forgotten

all about just at the time when it might have done some good to remember it.

"I'm Barbara Locke," she said, uttering the name as proudly as in the days when she had intended to make it famous; "and I used to have the back room on the second floor. Is it by any chance for rent?"

"Yes," said the girl, "it is that. Do you want it again?"

"I think I do," said Barbara, and followed up the stairs.

The room was as she had left it; the old couch, the battered chairs, the little iron bedstead, the table; only, as when she had first come here, five years ago, the table had a plush covering and a simpering plaster statuette of Cupid on it.

And, as she had done five years before, she took up the plaster statuette in one hand, pulled off the cloth with the other, and handed them over—"Take these away; I want this table to write on."

She paid her rent for a week. "But what's that?" she asked, pointing to a small parcel on the floor.

"Oh, that belongs to the fellow that was in here," said the girl. "He'll be back after it, and I'll leave it outside the door here for him." And she went away.

Barbara unpacked her clothes and hung them on the wall behind the curtain that served for a

closet. She put her little typewriter on the table, unlocked it from its case and raised the keys. There was still in the roller a faded sheet of paper. She took it out, bent the creases from it, and inserted it again carefully.

She had to write something. And, because nothing else came into her mind to write, she made what looked like a poem by one of the Younger School:

The quick brown
fox
jumped
over
the
lazy
dog.

Then she reached over to where the cigarettes and matches lay on the table, lighted up, and sent a cool cloud of smoke across the room.

"Barbara Locke's herself again," she whispered.

It didn't need any effort of the imagination to transport herself back through those five years to the romantic past which this room so vividly symbolized. She *was* back there—at the happy age of almost twenty-one, just arrived in New York, and facing the world with courage and

curiosity and the will to success. Life lay before her. She could make of it what she chose.

When a girl married, she became—a wife. She ceased to be a person. And what was worse, by some terrible alchemy which marriage brought, she didn't care. She was happy in just being that man's wife. She gave up her ambitions. She gave up her name. She lived in and through him. She had no life of her own; she existed to love him, and comfort him, and sew his buttons on. That was all a man wanted of a woman. Well, she wouldn't be a wife. That was settled. She was going to write.

She turned again to her typewriter.

And then Mrs. Casey spoiled it all. First there was a discreet tap at the door, and then Mrs. Casey, looking very sympathetic, entered. The same Mrs. Casey unchanged by the years.

"Oh, Mrs. Riggs!" she said.

"I'm *not* Mrs. Riggs," said Barbara defiantly, springing up.

"You poor darling child!" said Mrs. Casey, advancing with outstretched arms. "Well do I know the troubles that women have to bear! Tell me all about it!"

"There's nothing to tell," said Barbara sternly.

"Of course there isn't," said Mrs. Casey heartily. "Don't say a word. Just put your

little head right here," and she indicated her broad bosom, "and cry your heart out."

Barbara's first emotion was of disgust at this ridiculous invitation; and her next emotion was of surprise, as she found herself unreservedly accepting it.

She had got rid of Mrs. Casey at last. She was ashamed of that outburst of emotion. But, after all, it had served to clear her mind. She had stopped crying and said to Mrs. Casey, bitterly:

"Oh, you're right, I'm just a woman after all! And what foolish creatures women are!"

"They're as the Lord made them," said Mrs. Casey tolerantly. "It's not for me to be criticizing them. But I will say that it does seem queer sometimes, the way we have to take on about some poor stick of a man. But there's no getting around it. That's the way we are."

"But you don't behave that way, Mrs. Casey—do you?" asked Barbara.

"To tell you God's own truth, I don't—not any more. But you shouldn't judge by me. Bless your heart, I'm an old reprobate; easy come, easy go, is my motto. I've my house to bother about. But I was as foolish as any woman in the world when I had a husband of my own."

"Mrs. Casey," said Barbara earnestly, "what

is there about marriage that does this to us? I'd like to know!"

But Mrs. Casey had expressed all her wisdom already; for the rest of her stay she was vague and repetitious; and when she found that Mr. Riggs neither got drunk and beat her, nor gambled away all his money, nor ran after other women, she was inclined to be indignant at Barbara. "You don't know what a prince among men you've got!" she said. "That's the trouble with women—when they're lucky, they don't know it!"

So Barbara, left at last alone, had to think out things for herself. She was a little shaken by the memory of Mrs. Casey's reproaches. For Mrs. Casey represented, as she realized, the world. Nobody would understand, any better than Mrs. Casey. But she held her head defiantly erect, and thought:

"I've got a right to be *myself*. That comes first of all. And if marriage prevents *that*, it's wrong. People can think what they like. They're all under the matrimonial illusion. I've been, for nearly five years. Now I've got over it; and I'm going to stay over it. I can't help it if Henry's heart breaks. Mine will break, too, I expect. It won't be easy. But I'm going to go through with it. Only—how did it happen?"

She tried to puzzle that out. "It wasn't his fault, any more than it was mine. We drifted

into it. I stopped being myself, just to please him." And then she paused to wonder: "Why didn't *he* stop being himself—just to please *me?*" And the answer came: "Men just don't, that's all."

She thought again: "I gave up my job and moved with him to that horrible little New Jersey suburb. Why? Because we were married, and married people want to live together. But my job was in New York. Why didn't he give up his job and the chance of promotion, and stay with me?" And the answer came: "I'd have despised him if he had!"

Yes, it was true; he cared about his work more than about love; and that was why she loved him. But she had cared about him more than about her work; and that was why she despised herself. But *he* hadn't despised her for being that way. He hadn't minded her changing from what she had been to just a woman who sewed on his buttons. No, he liked it. And that was why she hated him.

But, after all, it was her own lookout. It was too easy to blame some one else for what happened to one's self. He had kept on doing what he wanted to do; and she had stopped. She had stopped to help him. Because she loved him. Doubtless that was the reason. But why had she loved him? Perhaps because he needed her

help! That was so absurd that it might well be the truth, she reflected.

And she grew angry. Must women be like that? Must they care so little for their work and so much for some man? If it was splendid in a man to care greatly for his work, why shouldn't it be splendid in a woman?

She turned again to her typewriter, fiercely. . . . But she had nothing to write.

She looked about for a stray newspaper. But there was none, and she opened the door to go out to a news-stand. In the hall, her foot struck against something on the floor. She picked it up, and then remembered that it was the parcel she had seen in her room. It was loosely wrapped, and felt like a book. She took it back into her room and unwrapped it. A pink-covered book—"The Concise Oxford Dictionary."

"Words!" she said. "Just what I want!" And she sat down and copied out: *a, an, aard-vark, Aaron's beard, Aaron's rod, aback, abacus, Abaddon, abaft* . . . until both sides of her sheet of paper were covered with words. And then feeling hungry, and discovering from her watch that it was halfway through the afternoon, she went out to get something to eat.

As she went out, a man came in; and she particularly noted him, because he looked as though he might be a younger brother to Henry. . . .

She realized that she had not thought of Henry for a whole hour, while she was copying those silly, lovely words on paper.

She did not want to go to one of the Village restaurants, because she might meet some one she knew; and she did not want to have to explain—yet. She would have a delicatessen lunch in her own room.

She bought slices of meat and bread, butter, pickles, coffee, sugar, cream, and a cheap alcohol cooking outfit to make the coffee on.

When she opened her door, she thought it was Henry sitting there waiting for her. But no, it wasn't Henry—it was that boy who might have been his younger brother, whom she had seen entering the house.

"Oh!" she said, clinging tight to the big bag of food she had almost dropped.

He turned from where he was sitting at the table, thumbing the leaves of the little dictionary —and then jumped up. "I'm sorry!"

And then, as he said nothing else, she told him severely, "This is my room."

"I suppose so," he said. "You see, it *was* mine."

She again said, "Oh!" And she added, "Then that is your dictionary." His presence being thus satisfactorily accounted for, she put down her bundle of food.

"Yes," he said. "I thought—"

"Well?"

"I saw somebody had been using my dictionary—"

"Yes—*I* was."

"I didn't know, of course. And I thought—I was waiting here for that person to come back. I thought he might possibly need a dictionary. And I was hoping I could sell it to—him. That," he concluded painfully, "is how I came to be in your room."

She suddenly realized that this boy, who might be Henry's younger brother, was by no means so well-nourished as Henry; in fact, he looked as though he were starving.

"I do need a dictionary," she said. "We'll talk about it in just a moment. I'm making myself some lunch now. Won't you join me? Please do. My name is Barbara Locke. What's yours?" She smiled and held out her hand.

"Hugh Lorimer," he said. "I don't think that I can—"

"Sit down," she said firmly.

He sat down.

"You're a writer?" she asked, presently, when she had put the coffee on.

"Yes—sort of."

"What?"

"Well—a poet," he admitted uncomfortably.

"Here," she said, giving him a plate with a big sandwich and a pickle, "start in on this. The coffee will be ready in a minute."

He *was* hungry. But it was the coffee that thawed him out. He began to talk, and without much difficulty she had his whole story. It was simple enough. He had told it all when he said he was a poet. . . . But there was a girl mixed up in it. With a little more difficulty, she got that out of him, too. They had been engaged back at home in the South, he said. He had come to New York to look for a newspaper job; and had so far failed to find one. Then she had written to him, urging him to come home; her father would give him a job as a salesman, she wrote, and they could be married. That was what hurt —that she didn't believe in him. . . .

"Don't you care!" said Barbara softly.

And meeting some look of tenderness in her eyes, the boy melted, and flung himself at her feet, with his head in her lap, crying.

Barbara caressed the soft black hair of his head, and felt a fierce contempt for that girl. . . . He lifted his face, and looked at her, hungry for woman's devotion. And she stooped and kissed him—a fierce, tender, shy, passionate, impersonal kiss, womankind's tribute to the mankind that needs it and will stumble and fail in a dark world without it.

And holding him in her arms, she talked to him. "Don't you care," she whispered. "She isn't worth it. You will show her. And she will be sorry. And you'll find plenty of nicer girls who will believe in you. . . ."

"Do *you*—believe in me?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, and kissed him again.

He stood up, ashamed of his childishness. "I don't know what's been the matter with me," he said.

She knew; the matter with him was that he was a man. But she didn't tell him so.

"You're all right now, aren't you?"

"Yes," he said.

And she knew he was.

He looked around for his hat.

"You were going to let me buy your dictionary," she reminded him.

He flushed. "Oh, I couldn't let *you* buy it," he said.

She knew that it was useless to argue the matter. Besides, what was a little money to him now? He had what was really necessary—the renewed belief in himself that only a woman can give.

"Won't you take it—for remembrance?" he said.

"For remembrance—yes."

They shook hands, and he strode out. At the

door he turned and said, "You've been—wonderful!"

"Well," she thought to herself, "I'd call it something else. But if I just can't help being wonderful—"

Laughing softly, she packed up and went home, and sewed the button on Henry's shirt.

She had just finished with the button when Henry came in. He was contrite and she forgave him graciously.

"But what's that?" he asked, seeing a pink-covered book on her work table.

"Oh, just a dictionary," she told him.

That night before she went to bed she turned the leaves of the dictionary and said to it:

"Little book, you belong to me, now. All your silly, lovely words are mine. And they will help me to remember all the silly, lovely thoughts I had before I became just a woman. For hours at a time I shall be my old, free self. Between times, I shall be my woman-self again, for a man's sake. He shall have his wife, to love him and comfort him, and even perhaps sew his buttons on. But there shall be a Barbara Locke, too—by Heaven!" she ended fiercely.

"Aren't you coming to bed, Babs?" her husband called.

"Yes, darling," she said.

THE TIGRESS

Tigress, tigress, burning bright
In the forests of the night—
(Professor, pray forgive the ways
Of irreverent paraphrase;
And go find something else to do—
This song is not addressed to you!)
Lovely tigress, full of fright
In the forests of the night,
In the jungles of delight—
Looking left and looking right,
Ready to take sudden flight—
Don't be so afraid, poor beastie!
I won't touch you; or at least I
Won't until you've well got over
These first tremblings, and discover
There's no need to run to cover!
I won't hurt you: why so scary,
Timid-bold, alert and airy—
Pretty creature, why so wary?
Perhaps you think I mean to catch you,
Take you home, and keep and watch you,
Hold and chain you, bind and tame you,
Clip your claws, and feed and name you!
Well—am I so much to blame, you

Lovely darling, if I do
All those terrible things to you?
You are here beneath my hand—
You are mine, do you understand?
If you didn't want to be netted,
Why did you come here to be petted?

* * *

But who would have thought, a while ago,
That you would lie here, purring so,
Against my knee, beneath my hand?
Chained to me with an iron band—
Or a silken leash, it's all the same!—
Claws well clipped, knowing your name,
Ready to follow my beck and call—
Why, you're just a kitten, after all!

IV. The Gifts of the Fourth Goddess

APRIL—MAY

When I was a girl my mother would say,
"April—May!
These are the months to beware of the moon,
May—June!

"And the blackbird singing upon the spray,
April—May!
Beware, my child, of the blackbird's tune."
May—June!

When I was sixteen no more than a day,
April—May!
I met a young man in the flush of the noon.
May—June!

His step was light and his manner was gay,
April—May!
And he came from afar, by the dust on his shoon.
May—June!

I looked at him once, and I looked away,
April—May!
And my heart it asked but a single boon.
May—June!

"I love you," he said, "for ever and aye!"
April—May!
For ever and ever—the blackbird's tune!
May—June!

I could not leave him or send him away,
April—May!
So we walked in the wood by the light of the moon.
May—June!

I had clean forgot what my mother did say,
April—May!
But I learned it all and I learned it soon.
May—June!

A blossoming branch in the wind a-sway,
April—May!
And petals over the grasses strewn. . . .
May—June!

The Gifts of the Fourth Goddess

IN Philistia, which means, according to its wisest scholars, the place of Christian fellowship, there long existed, in one shape or another, and under various names, three supernatural pagan beings. They had been goddesses at one time in their dim past, before Philistia was discovered; but more recently they had been fairies in Merrie England, where they were best known as Mab and Mop and Tib, and it was as fairies that they came over in the *Mayflower* to see what the land of promise was like.

Some little while later, after listening to a sermon by the Rev. Cotton Mather against witches, a sermon that they felt might be misunderstood by the populace, they decided to go South. In the South they remained for a long time, and were held in great honor and respect by the black people from Africa as voodoo goddesses, their names at this period being Ana, Thema, and Maranatha. Tiring of this crude worship, they came back North, arriving in Boston in time to put on red caps and participate in a rather wild masquerade tea party given by the

younger set. Their names at this time were Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

But things after a while grew dull, and the three goddesses, realizing that they were not popular any more, assumed the shapes of old women and set up housekeeping in a quiet cottage in the Catskills. The truth was that there seemed to be no place for them in Philistia. They, who had been honored and loved and feared by great nations in the past, were simply not wanted here, in any shape, or under any name. In fact, ever since that sermon of the Rev. Cotton Mather, they had been a little like hunted criminals who must go about in disguise.

It was a sympathetic gentleman by the name of Washington Irving, a story-teller, stopping at their cottage while on one of his rambles, who, hearing their troubles, suggested that they had perhaps better adapt themselves to circumstances, and take up some useful employment, like everybody else in Philistia. They decided accordingly to adapt themselves, and went to New York City to look for work.

But what could three old women do? They tried plain sewing, they tried scrubbing floors in office buildings, they tried selling newspapers on the street; but none of these occupations was quite satisfactory. They kept hoping for some position which, if it lacked authority, had at

least some dignity. They realized that they were old; they had lived on, through many civilizations, into one which had no use for them; all they wanted was a little respect to console them in their old age.

The search for such a position seemed hopeless enough; but one day the youngest of them came hurrying home to the others with a really brilliant idea. A court-house was being erected in a provincial town in Philistia, and the contractor was in trouble. The plans called for four statues at the steps of the court-house, two standing and two sitting, emblematic of Justice and Wisdom, Truth, and Mercy. The contractor had gone to a sculptor, and had been shocked to learn that he wanted a hundred dollars apiece for making these statues, the contractor to furnish the marble. Four hundred dollars, in addition to the cost of the marble, would unfortunately cut down the contractor's profit on the whole court-house job to something less than three thousand per cent., and that seemed to him unreasonable. So he had gone to a stone-cutter and mortuary-monument-maker; but the stone-cutters and mortuary-monument-makers had just formed a union, and asked more for making these statues than the sculptor had asked.

"Here," said the youngest goddess, "is our opportunity, girls. We will take the place of those

statues, and nobody except the contractor will ever know the difference. It is certainly a genteel kind of employment, which is more than can be said for scrubbing floors."

"But there are only three of us," they protested.

"We'll have to find another," she said. "In fact," she added, "I've heard of one already." And she whispered a name which was once known in Babylon.

"What!" they exclaimed, "that horrid old thing! We've never associated with *her*. We are surprised at you, sister."

"But she's reformed," said the goddess, apologetically. "She's terribly respectable now. In fact, she's been the dean at a girls' college for the last seventy or eighty years. She's got to change her job soon, just for that reason. And we don't have to *speak* to her."

To make a long story short, the fourth goddess was willing to join them, the contractor gladly accepted their offer, they took their places at the court-house steps, and there they stayed—except for one night which they took off to go to a christening a little more than a quarter of a century ago.

There was a school-teacher in that town who married just to escape the embarrassment of being looked up to and disliked by children for

her alleged wisdom. She was embarrassed, because she was really just a child herself; so much so that she still read fairy-stories. She had often seen the statues at the steps of the court-house, and had noticed the resemblance of three of them, Truth, Mercy, and Wisdom, to the personages with whom she was familiar in her favorite fairy-tales. After thinking it over she decided they were Titania and Melusina and Psyche. She whispered to them as she went past on her way to school: "Hello, Titania! Hello, Melusina! Hello, Psyche!" And since these were among the many names which they had borne in their immemorial past, they were obliged to acknowledge the greeting, and nodded their heads slightly as she went by. They also smiled, because they were really quite pleased to come across some one who knew them. And one day, shortly after she was married, she said to them: "When I have a son, I shall name him Pat, and you shall be invited to the christening. And you must bring gifts."

Talking it over afterward, they agreed that it would be a jolly thing to do. It reminded them of old times in Merrie England, when they used to be invited to christenings quite regularly. But the fourth goddess, beneath her marble dignity, felt hurt and aggrieved because she had been ignored. She was not used to being ignored.

The young wife, whose name was Mrs. Flower, had been puzzled by that fourth statue, the one of Justice, which also reminded her of some one she had known, but not pleasantly. Suddenly, however, staring into the stern countenance of the statue, she remembered, and said, "Why, how do you do, Miss Wilkinson!"

And the statue nodded and smiled very stonily, thinking, "It's about time she recognized me."

Miss Wilkinson had been the dean at the girls' college from which Mrs. Flower had been expelled in her stormy youth.

Presently the child was born, and turned out to be a girl. So Mrs. Flower called her Pat, anyway. And then she remembered the fairies one night in the hospital just before she fell asleep, and whispered, "Dear fairies, come and have a christening party!"

The goddesses heard, and it being a dark night, when no one would notice their absence from the court-house steps, they felt quite justified in taking a short leave. They had been on duty steadily for seven years, and they considered that they were entitled to a little pleasure.

"I do not feel quite certain," said Miss Wilkinson, stiffly, "that she meant to include me in her invitation to her son's christening."

"Why, of course," said Titania.

"Why not?" said Psyche.

"And you can give him gifts that we can't," said Melusina.

"Yes," said Miss Wilkinson, "I believe that I can give him some really valuable gifts. So I suppose she must have intended to ask me. But she might have been a trifle less casual about it!"

So Miss Wilkinson came along with the others, and they entered silently through the panes of glass into the little room at the hospital where the mother lay asleep.

"But where's the baby?" asked Titania.

"In the ward with the other new babies, doubtless," said Miss Wilkinson. "This makes our errand almost ridiculous, don't you think? A christening party without any child!" She was very much put out.

"Oh, well," said Psyche, "now we're here, let's just go ahead."

"His name is Pat," said Melusina, "and the name's enough for us. What we give to 'Pat,' he'll get. So it's all right."

"I feel that we are perhaps being derelict in our municipal duty," said Miss Wilkinson, "in leaving our posts for a mere private engagement."

"We'll hurry," said Titania. "Shall I begin? I'm the youngest. I've almost forgotten how it ought to go. Pat, I too give thee thy name and take thee as my godchild. And with thy name I give such gifts as I can—the power to change

the shapes of all things, so that what was commonplace shall be wonderful, and what was sublime shall be ridiculous; and I give thee the gift of changing thine own shape, so that thou shalt be to any one whatever thou pleasest to seem; and I give thee the gift of laughter."

"And I," said Psyche, "give thee the gift of curiosity. As I was curious, so shalt thou be curious about everything, and especially about those things which are forbidden thee to know. And with this gift I must perforce give thee another—the gift of suffering."

"And I," said Melusina, "give thee my own gift. As I am a creature of the sea, so shalt thou be, my child. And as I strove to be human and to know mortal love, so shalt thou strive—without ever quite succeeding. And I give thee my secret, which no mortal should know, and which, if any rash mortal lover learn it from thee, will bring a swift end to the mortal happiness you have shared." And she whispered—into her own two hands cupped as if to a baby's ear.

"Fine gifts, those are, if you will permit me to say so!" exclaimed Miss Wilkinson, ironically. "Where would that poor child be with your gifts, and without mine, if I might ask? Fortunately, I can make those gifts comparatively harmless, and even useful in their way, by giving him a

proper sense of his social responsibilities, a respect for custom, and a fear of making himself ridiculous. With your gifts *and* mine, he may go far; he may become a senator. But without my gifts, what would he become? A starveling mountebank, I dare say!"

"Well, hurry up and give him your gifts, then," said Titania.

But Miss Wilkinson had seen, on a little table at the head of the bed where Mrs. Flower lay sleeping, a letter which Mrs. Flower had been writing. Miss Wilkinson had acquired the habit of reading the private letters of her pupils whenever opportunity offered, not in vulgar curiosity, of course, but from a deep sense of her custodianship over their behavior. And so, from old habit, she had read the exposed lines of writing. They were upside down, but she had learned to read handwriting upside down, and at a glance. And what she read made her start, and taking up the letter, she read aloud to the others with cold emphasis this passage:

"I hoped he would be a boy, but she's a girl, and I'm going to call her Pat just the same."

"It seems that we have been mistaken, and I think I may say deliberately deceived, as to the sex of our godchild," she said sternly.

"What of it?" asked Titania.

"What *of* it? Well, really! If you don't know,

I must point out that your gifts—all of them—are, considering the sex of the child, most inappropriate. You should realize that mine are the only gifts proper for a girl child."

"It's too late now," said Titania.

"We can't take back our gifts," said Psyche, "and you know it. What's given, is given."

"Moreover," said Melusina, maliciously, "you must give her *your* gifts, too. You accepted the invitation to the christening, so you can't get out of it! I'm not so old but that I can remember the rules and regulations for fairy-godmothers."

But Miss Wilkinson had been treated much too inconsiderately. Always a stickler for form, her sense of the proprieties had been deeply outraged by these irregular proceedings. And now they were attempting to force her to connive at, and to participate in, their mistake! She drew herself up very haughtily.

"Very well," she said. "I give this child *my* gifts also, but as a bequest, to come into effect at my death. As it happens, I also know the rules and regulations concerning fairy gifts." And drawing her robe about her with a magnificent gesture, she swept out through the window.

It is well known that fairies and such-like supernatural pagan beings do not die natural deaths, though they can be destroyed by violent means,

such as fire or gunpowder. But who would shoot a dignified old lady, especially since she looked like a marble statue of Justice as she stood at the court-house steps? Miss Wilkinson's expectations of life were many times greater than this baby's. Except by some very unlikely accident, Pat Flower would never inherit her gifts at all.

"Well, that's that!" said Psyche.

"I wonder what she *will* be like," said Melusina, a little awed at what they had done. For, after all, it *was* unusual to give a girl child all these gifts. They hadn't been given to very many, ever: just to Cleopatra and Mary Queen of Scots and Nell Gwynne and some others—a few actresses and queens.

"Wait and see," said Titania, who didn't care what happened.

And so they all flew back to the court-house steps.

And there, in the only place of dignity left them in the civilization of Philistia, they remained, motionless, silent, thinking of old times.

Pat Flower grew up.

Limitations of space, good manners, and, failing everything else, the libel laws, forbid a detailed account of her career. Suffice it to say that she became the girl poet whom you all admire and love and wonder about. She grew up lack-

ing in any proper sense of her social responsibilities, without any respect for custom, and without any fear of making herself ridiculous. And she had the power to change the shapes of all things, so that what had been vulgar became beautiful when she celebrated it in a poem; and what had been holy became, when she mocked at it, absurd. And she herself seemed whatever she chose to seem; and she chose to seem many different things to many different people. And, as not the least of Titania's gifts, she could turn her lovers into asses with long ears; she could do that by a look. Moreover, she had Psyche's gift of curiosity. She was curious about everything—especially about those things which it was forbidden to know. And with this gift there came perforce another—the gift of suffering. And being Melusina's godchild, she was not quite human, being a creature of the salt and changing sea; and yet, like Melusina, she must strive to be human, and to know mortal love—and not quite succeed. And she had Melusina's whispered secret, which no mortal should know, and which, if any rash mortal lover wrested from her, brought a swift end to the mortal happiness they had shared. And, because she was a poet, she was sometimes behind in her rent for her little room in Greenwich Village. But, being under compul-

sion by reason of those fairy gifts, she couldn't stop being a poet.

And then one night a private detective, who had been hired to watch the Reds and circumvent their plots, having discovered that there were no plots to circumvent, and being in great fear of losing his job, and wishing to convince his employers that the republic was in danger, accordingly planted a picric-acid bomb under the steps of the court-house in a provincial town in which an editor of an obscure radical paper had been sentenced to ninety-nine years' imprisonment for criticizing the Government. The statues of Justice, Wisdom, Truth, and Mercy were blown to bits.

High explosives can destroy anything—custom, learning, beauty, love, civilization itself.

And so the goddesses ceased to exist. That is to say, they existed now only in so far as they existed in Pat, in whom their gifts were incarnate. She was at the same time freed from the compulsion of these gifts, being now herself a demi-goddess. As such, she was free, and could use her gifts or not, as she chose. Moreover, to the other gifts at her command were now added those of the fourth goddess—a sense of social responsibility, respect for custom, and the fear of making herself ridiculous.

Pat, of course, did not know all this. But the fairy spell which had been cast over her was dissolved. She could do just as she pleased now. She could keep on being a poet if she really wanted to, or she could become a perfectly respectable young lady.

The next morning Pat Flower remembered that she had become engaged last night. To be sure, she had been engaged many times before; but this was different. This time she was in love. (To be sure, she had been in love many times before; but this was different.)

She was really going to marry him. His name was John. She adored him. (To be sure—but this was different.)

He worshiped her. Naturally! And he didn't mind her keeping on writing love-poems after they were married. "Because," he said, "people will know they're written to your husband. And it will make people realize that married lovers can be just as happy as the other kind."

The idea rather pleased her—writing the poetry of married lovers.

He had discovered the real truth about her—that underneath her airs of gay cynicism and bravado she was a shy, helpless, hurt child, an idealist who believed in the things at which she mocked, vastly weary of the pretenses which she

had made so beautiful and so convincing in her poems. He really understood her.

(To be sure—but this was different.)

She had *wanted* to believe in love before, and now she did believe in it. Yes, she really meant it this time. She loved John with all her heart. And she knew—she knew profoundly—that she was going to be a good wife to him. Oh, terribly good! She would darn his socks, and everything.

It almost scared her, this prospect of voluntary, contented goodness.

"John," she said to him, "give me a month to have my fling in. Then I'll marry you."

"All right, darling. Go ahead and have your fling," he said indulgently. "I know you won't do anything I wouldn't want you to do."

"I'm afraid I won't," she said, and sighed. "But—you're to stay away all the month. You're not to come to see me at all."

That was a hard bargain, he thought, but he had to accept it.

And all that month, up to the last day, she sat at home and darned socks. She bought the socks at a sock-store, and cut holes in the toes with her manicure scissors, and darned the holes neatly. She was pretending they were John's socks.

She had bought thirty pairs of socks, but the month had thirty-one days in it; on the last day,

she had no socks to darn. She moped all morning. She wrote a little poem in the afternoon—a love-poem, entitled "Married Love." It began:

"Soft brown wool
From soft brown sheep,
You shall make comfortable
His darling feet!"

She did not even notice at the time that *feet* didn't rhyme very well with *sheep.* Love had never affected her like that before. No madness had ever been so transcendent—and she had known some madnesses in her young life—as to make her forget the principles of her art, which shows that this was true love at last.

There still remained the evening to be got through somehow. To-morrow they would be married. But to-night— No, she must *not* call him up and tell him he could come to see her. She had to stick it out somehow.

She put on her little hat and went out.

As she went along the street, she saw a new sign that said: "Fortunes told—25 cents." She felt in her purse. She had just twenty-five cents. She went in.

There sat an old man with a long white beard, looking at least a hundred years old.

"Please tell my fortune," she said, and laid down her quarter.

"Let me see your hand," said the old man, gravely.

She gave him her hand, the left one. The old man looked thoughtfully at her engagement-ring, John's solitaire.

"You are going to be married," he said.

"Why, that's true!" she said in great surprise. Evidently there was something to fortune-telling, after all. She settled herself trustfully in her chair. "Tell me some more," she said.

"You are going to be very happy," he told her.

"Ah!" she said.

"This is the first time you have ever been in love," he told her, with a glance at her ingenuous countenance, so like a child's. "You have never known what love meant before."

(True, perfectly true!)

"You have wondered if you were in love before; but you soon found out that it wasn't so."

(Why, this was uncanny!)

"And this is to be the great love of your life," he told her.

"Will it last forever?" she asked wistfully.

He peered closely into her palm.

"Yes, forever," he said. "I must tell you the truth. I see here the signs of an absolutely happy and absolutely perfect marriage."

"That's just what I'm afraid of," she said a little sadly.

"Afraid? Why?" he asked in surprise.

"I don't know why; but that's just how I feel."

"Your fear," he said, "draws my attention to this curious little cross at the base of the index-finger. That cross indicates that you are—" he glanced at the calendar on the wall, and spoke with some excitement—"yes, this very day, in some grave danger!"

"Really!" she said. "What danger?"

He shook his head gravely at this.

"In order to know that, I shall have to cast your horoscope, and that costs twenty-five cents more."

"That was all the money I had with me," she said. "Couldn't you trust me till to-morrow? I live right down the street here. My name's Pat Flower." She hoped he *might* know who she was.

He did, it seemed.

"Are you"—he stared at her—"Pat Flower!"

"Yes," she admitted.

"I've always wanted to meet you," he said, and took off his white beard. He wasn't a day over twenty-five.

"But—you really aren't going to get married, are you?" he demanded.

"Aren't I? You said I was!"

"Well, I take it back. You—you mustn't!"

"Why not?"

"I'll tell you why not," he said earnestly. "But first let me tell you who I am. I'm a newspaper man, and I'm doing this as an assignment—Greenwich Village Has Its Fortune Told. I've only been in New York a few weeks. I've worked on newspapers all over the country, and everywhere I've gone, people are reading you and talking about you. Young people, I mean."

"What do they say about me?" she asked.

"That's just it. They say awful things about you—or things that would be awful if they were said about anybody else. But—they love you for it."

"That's curious," she said.

"In Philistia," he said, "the pagan spirit has been pretty well stamped out. But still it's there—in the young people. They read your poetry. It means something to them. It's beauty, it's joy, it's freedom. And here you want to go and spoil it—by getting married! Why, you *can't* get married! You're our pagan goddess, if you only knew it. All the beautiful things we want to do, and can't, because we live in Philistia, you do them for us, and write about them for us, and we worship you for them."

"How do you know I do the things I write about?" she asked.

"That makes no difference, so long as we believe it. But if you get married—why, everybody will think those love-poems are written to your *husband!*"

She was struck by that. It was exactly what John had said. People *would* think just that.

"Don't you see?" he exclaimed. "A goddess can't sit at home and darn her husband's socks!"

Well, there might be something to that.

"You can't belong to just one person. You belong to us all—the boys and girls of the younger generation."

"I see," said Pat. "I've a certain—you might call it social responsibility in this matter."

"Exactly!" said the young man. "You have a tremendous social responsibility."

"And if I'm a pagan goddess, I suppose I must behave as one," she went on reflectively.

"Of course. You can't defy the custom of the centuries just to please some man."

"True; one must respect old and established custom. But—still—" She did love poor John. It would be a pity—

The fortune-teller saw her waver.

"Why," he said, "it would be perfectly *ridiculous* for you to be married."

She flushed.

"I suppose it would be rather ridiculous," she said slowly, "for *me* to be married—"

He rose triumphantly.

"You won't," he said.

"No—I guess I won't. Poor John!"

"Oh, forget poor John!" said the young man. "Let's go somewhere for dinner."

Indeed, he *was* rather handsome.

Some time that night Pat Flower wrote the poem—you know the one I mean—which most endears her to the hearts of all young people who believe in beauty and joy and freedom. She sent it to John next morning by messenger-boy, by way of breaking her engagement.

And thus it was that Pat Flower, the girl poet, made use of the gifts of the fourth goddess.

YOUNG WIFE, WAKING

Shadow-boy, shadow lover,
Why do you come
To enchant me, to haunt me,
To trouble me in dreams?

The remembered delirium
Of your dream-kiss
Seems more real now than this
That I wake to take in the light of day
From him who lay by my side all night.

Are you the ghost of some old desire,
Lawless and lost—some dead caprice—
That you conspire against my peace?
Would you remind me
Of some rash vow left behind me?
Must you perturb me now?
What's over is over,
O phantom-lover!

Or are you the warning in my breast
Of some new passion dawning unconfessed?
Some wild longing that I dare not know by day,
That I must hide away in a secret dream at night,

Shuttered utterly from sight—
Lest I seem to be wronging one too dear so to
wrong—
One to whom my dreams belong!
Do you hear?

How does one exorcise
A boy-ghost with laughing eyes?
Anathema maranatha! Pax tecum! Amen!
Shadow lover,
Shadow-boy,
Come not again!

V. "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum!"

Blue eyes, brown eyes, green-and-gold eyes,
  Eyes that question, doubt, deny,
Sudden-flashing, sweet, young, bold eyes—
  Here's your answer: I am I!

Not for you and not for any
  Came I into this man's town;
Barkeep, here's my golden penny—
  Come who will and drink it down!

I'm not one to lend and borrow,
  I'm not one to overstay—
I shall go alone to-morrow,
  Whistling, as I came to-day!

"Hallelujah, I'm a Bum!"

THE world is full of good and useful people. Jasper Weed was perhaps neither useful nor good. And perhaps he had no need to be, for he was charming. But, oddly enough, he wanted to be useful, he wanted to be good. Yet his destiny made him first a tramp, then a criminal, and then a fugitive from justice. And it all began with a house.

It was an old house, as stately and graceful in its outlines as any you could find in New England, with a pillared doorway that strangers stopped in the street to admire. Jasper's mother loved that house. It had been bought by her father in the days when he was rich and proud; but he had died poor and bitter, with nothing in the world to leave his daughter except this house, mortgaged for a good deal more than it was worth. Everybody said it would be a sensible thing to let the house go for the debt. But Jasper's mother was not a sensible woman; she was an idealist, of a sort. That house stood for beauty and order and pride and place in the

world. She would never give it up; she said she would die first.

The mortgage was held by the factory. Jasper's father worked in the factory as a bookkeeper. Doubtless his wife had expected him to rise to be superintendent, for he had been ambitious and enterprising as a young man; but he had remained a bookkeeper. The factory people were very good about the mortgage; they renewed it year after year, saying there was no need to worry. But Jasper's parents worried just the same. They had managed to pay off part of the mortgage, but it began to seem a lifetime task. Jasper's father became sullen and discouraged, Jasper's mother shrill and querulous.

It was a big house, too big for one woman to take care of, as she frequently remarked in a vaguely reproachful voice. Young Jasper took these reproaches to himself. He knew he was always tracking in dirt and making extra work for his poor mother. He didn't intend to; he just forgot. He loved his mother, and wanted to grow up so that he could go to work and help pay off that mortgage.

When Jasper was fifteen he had his chance. The factory people decided at last to foreclose. The matter was put to Mr. Weed in the most considerate manner.

"I should honestly think," said the superin-

tendent, "that you'd feel it was taking a burden off your shoulders."

James Weed, on his own account, might well have felt relieved; he had long known that it was a hopeless struggle. But it would break his wife's heart.

It happened that Jasper was late from school that afternoon. He had been playing in the woods with his chums, and his mother would not fail to reproach him for not having been home to fill her wood-box or run some errand for her. Just as he came within sight of the house, he thought of these things and of the way his mother would look at him when he came in, late again. "I suppose you *just forgot!*" she would say quietly. All his blithe, careless happiness oozed out of him, and he did not have the courage to face her. He turned into a vacant lot beside the road, intending to sit down on a big rock for a few minutes' respite, as often before on such occasions.

But somebody else was sitting there on that rock in the dusk—Jasper's father. For his courage also had failed him, and he had stopped to think how he was going to confront the fierce, sad woman who lived in that house and loved it more than anything else on earth.

Father and son looked at each other in surprise, and then they seemed instinctively to under-

stand each other. And Jasper's father told him what had happened.

"But how are we going to tell your mother?" he asked.

"We can't tell her," said Jasper. "We've got to do something."

And the something they did was to go together to the home of the superintendent and make a plea to be given another chance to pay off the mortgage. It was an absurd but effective plea. The superintendent was embarrassed.

"Oh, well," he said, "if you feel that way about it! We'll let it go a little longer, and see how it works out."

Jasper was then in his third year at high school and doing well. But he quit school immediately and went to work in the factory, trying not to care. His life was now dedicated to saving the house.

When Jasper had been working in the factory a little more than a year, his Aunt Miriam paid the family a flying visit. She was a sister of his father's; she had sent him, when he was a little boy, a wonderful book by Mark Twain, called "Roughing It." Jasper used to ask about his Aunt Miriam; but she was a vaudeville actress, and hence a disgraceful person, and not to be spoken of any more than was necessary. But what he had heard, scant and mysterious phrases,

had made her a romantic figure in Jasper's mind.

She turned out to be a breezy, middle-aged little woman whose face was painted to look young and whose breath smelled of cigarettes. She brought into the old house an alien glamour, a hint of places far and strange.

After a stiff Sunday dinner with the family, she demanded to be escorted back to the railroad station by young Jasper, upon whose size and strength and handsomeness she had remarked with enthusiasm. On the way to the station she said abruptly:

"You look as though you could be one of the happiest boys alive, Jasper. What is the matter?"

Jasper looked at her with hurt eyes, unable to answer. She ought not to say such things. How could he help being unhappy?

Then suddenly she began to talk about the house.

Part of what she told him he knew already. But he hadn't known that his mother had been engaged to another man before she married his father, and had given him up because of the house. When Aunt Miriam spoke the man's name, Jasper cried out in surprise:

"Jack Tully, the drunkard!"

His aunt nodded.

"That's the one. A fine young fellow he was once. He took to drink because his feelings were hurt, and whose wouldn't be, to have a girl throw

him over for the sake of a house? You see, she knew he wasn't the sort of fellow that would settle down and work year in and year out to pay off a dirty mortgage."

Jasper's mind seemed to whirl in a dizzy arc through a vast empty gulf. As if from far away, he heard Aunt Miriam's voice telling him other things. About his father: his father had wanted to go to college and study to become a teacher, but he had put those dreams aside when he married. He had settled down in that little town to pay off the mortgage on that house.

That house—it began to seem a monstrous thing. And Jasper now for the first time realized that he had always hated and feared it. He had kept this hatred and fear a secret even from himself. But now that he knew, he was terribly afraid, as in a nightmare, and full of a sick, hopeless anger.

But the train drew in. Aunt Miriam stood on tiptoe to kiss him, and he flung his arms around her, almost crying. She held him and whispered:

"That house has ruined enough lives, Jasper. *Don't let it get you, too!* Good-by!"

That night Jasper could not sleep, and in the middle of the night he got up and went to the china dish where his mother kept the family money. Yesterday he had turned in his week's wages to her, keeping nothing. Now he took a

dollar from the china dish and left the house, walking west along the railroad track. By late summer, walking and beating his way on freights, he had reached the wheat-fields of Kansas. He never saw that house again.

In ten years Jasper had worked at a hundred different jobs in twenty different States. He had been farm-hand, mechanic, chauffeur, lumberman, hop-picker; he had been for a while a newspaper reporter, had gone for a few months to a Western state university; had had a few descriptive articles printed in obscure magazines; had sold real estate in California, almost settling down in a thriving suburb, almost getting married—only to take suddenly to the road again, working for a while and then wandering on farther.

"Curiously enough," he said to me, "it was being a tramp that first made me like work. When I was cooped up in that factory as a kid, I hated and loathed work, and wasn't much good at it. That was because I thought I *had* to work. But when I hit the road, I found that I didn't have to work unless I wanted to. I could live without working, and just about as well as I had lived before. Yes, I went hungry sometimes, and I took my life in my hands every time I hopped a freight; but I didn't mind that. I was free. And when I did get a job, I could throw it up the

minute I didn't like it. So I kept on working. And when I found I was clumsy, and that other fellows not as strong as I could do better work, it roused my pride. I would show them! And I did. For the first time in my life I worked well.

"That was the trouble. I worked so well that I had to throw up the job, sooner or later, for fear I would get to be a fixture and settle down there! That almost happened to me once, that time in California when I was selling real estate. I was pretty much in love with a girl, and I don't know what would have happened, but one night her father turned on the porchlight and caught us kissing. The girl ran up-stairs, and left me and her father to have it out. He wasn't angry at me; it seemed he liked me for some reason. He offered me a cigar, and talked to me in a friendly enough way—about himself. I guess he was as embarrassed as I was. He told me his whole history. He had been a poor boy, and had worked hard for everything he had. He had married young, when he had hardly one dollar to rub against another. It seemed reckless at the time, he said, but it had come out all right; now he owned this house, with the mortgages all paid off.

"No doubt the old man meant well, but it scared me. I saw myself settling down in that little town and buying a house for that girl to live in, and spending the rest of my life paying off the

mortgage. The truth was, I was almost crazy enough about her to do something like that, and that was what scared me. Well, that night I didn't go to bed. I walked up and down thinking about it, and then just before daybreak I lit out and took to the road again."

On the road, of course, a man who is afraid of marriage can feel freer in his mind. A girl is not very likely to want to marry a tramp. But Jasper was a handsome lad, and his shy ways were just the sort that many a girl takes to. As a vagabond he could find pretty girls to exchange kisses with, and yet not be afraid of becoming involved in domestic slavery and misery. If danger threatened, he drifted along and kept his freedom.

And yet it seems that he wasn't content with being a happy vagabond. He must have felt all along that he had a duty to the world, and he couldn't keep on running away from it. At any rate, when he was twenty-six years old he went through a swift process of conversion to the gospel of syndicalism, joined the Industrial Workers of the World, and became an active organizer.

Jasper Weed was now, according to his lights, striving to make the world more beautiful, orderly, and happy.

As is so often the case, these utopian endeavors were not generally appreciated. The organization was being accused of every crime, and Jasper, by becoming a member, became automatically a kind of outlaw, to be hunted down by the police. He was arrested again and again, and served many months in jail.

But he kept on, organizing the seasonal workers along the coast, assisting in strikes, joining in free-speech fights. The history of the American labor struggle, learned in many a tale from veterans old and young, became the background of his own life; names like Cœur d'Alene, Yakima Valley, and Mesaba Range stirred him like the names of battles. He was happy at last. Where else but in the "Wobbly" halls could he hear talk that was not the talk of money and the things money will buy? He had three good friends, Pete the Peg-leg, who knew the poetry of Shelley and Blake by heart; Swede Oscar, a kindly giant out of some heroic fairy-tale; and Little Bill, with a golden tongue for singing, and a mocking tongue for speech, who laughed even at the cause he loved. Jasper had always an immense capacity for friendship, and this was, from all accounts, a gay, devil-may-care, epic friendship while it lasted.

It was not fated to last long. The war against the organization became frantic and ruthless.

Men were thrown into jail for having a red card, and tales were told of others branded with red-hot irons. The death-roll mounted swiftly. Little Bill of the golden voice and mocking tongue was shot dead by a deputy sheriff down in the Sacramento Valley. Swede Oscar was thrown into a county jail of which terrible tales were told, and died there—killed, his friends said. And Pete the Peg-leg, in the free-speech fight at Seattle, on the boat that was met at the dock by an armed mob of citizens, was shot and killed at Jasper's side.

Jasper himself, wounded in the arm, lay hidden in the house of a fellow-worker. And there, waiting for his wound to heal, he had hours of sick and feverish thought. The whole world was at war: it seemed to him a kind of insanity, a suicide of the human race. He had scorned that folly. And yet—the thought came unbidden—what had he himself been doing except taking part in a war, the war of the classes? Was that, perhaps, a kind of insanity, too? Was it merely another way in which the human race was committing suicide?

He knew that he ought not to think such things. Those thoughts weakened a man for the struggle. They were not the thoughts of a fighter; they were the thoughts of a coward. Worse than that, they were the thoughts of a "scissor-bill," which is the militant term of healthy contempt for a

kind of weak-minded pacifist in the class war. Jasper was ashamed of himself. But these weak thoughts continued to infest him.

He had believed that he was helping to create a new society within the shell of the old. Perhaps that was true. But it seemed very dim and far away and theoretical just now. His friends—Bill dead, Oscar dead, Pete dead, killed like mad dogs. For what? The cause, the future. But friendship is beautiful, too.

Jasper was sick at heart. Oh, no doubt he would get back his old fighting spirit some time. But, feeling this way, could he go on with the struggle?

His wound healed, and there was need for him. But he did not answer the call. He ran away once more from duty. He beat his way back to New York, took some kind of job, and let the world alone.

The nations of the earth continued to make war against one another, and now the United States had been drawn into the struggle. Jasper, as a convicted criminal several times over, was not wanted in the armies of the republic; he was let alone for a while.

He had discovered Greenwich Village and modeling clay; he was living in a garret on Macdougal Street, and making queer and delightful

figurines in his spare time. He did not think he was an artist, but he knew that this gave him peace from tormenting thoughts.

Moreover, he had discovered in Greenwich Village a kind of tramp he had never known before—the artist kind. These painters, poets, story-writers, were old friends in a new guise. He and they understood one another perfectly. Perhaps I should say we understood one another, for I was one of those artistic tramps living in Greenwich Village then, and one of Jasper's new friends. We had him at all our parties, and he taught us to sing the "Wobbly" songs. It came natural enough to us to sing:

"Oh, why don't you work
Like other men do?
How the hell can I work
When there's no work to do?

"Hallelujah, I'm a bum!
Hallelujah, bum again!
Hallelujah, give us a hand-out—
Revive us again!"

It was at one of these parties that Jasper met Inez Vance, the artist, then poor and obscure and one of us. They fell in love with each other at the first glance, and for a fortnight we saw little enough of either of them.

But a fortnight was about as long as any of Inez Vance's enthusiasms lasted, and we were not surprised to see Jasper Weed back at our parties. He sang again a little sadly:

"Hallelujah, I'm a bum!
Hallelujah, bum again!"

And then came the news of the indictment by a Federal grand jury in Chicago of over a hundred members of the Industrial Workers of the World. Jasper Weed was among the number.

Mrs. Raymond, who had been at many of our parties, and who thought Jasper a nice boy, immediately put up the five-thousand-dollar bail set for him. And so Jasper remained with us for a while. But soon enough the time came for him to stand trial along with his friends, and we bade him good-by and good luck and saw him off on the train to Chicago. Inez Vance was not one of the farewell party.

"Good-by, boys and girls! I'm going back where I belong," was his parting word.

"Do you really think he is in any danger of having to go to prison?" some one asked.

"Oh, I don't think so," some one else answered lightly.

It wasn't until the trial had gone on for some time that we realized the truth.

The trial was slowly nearing its end when Jasper Weed, from his place in one of the long rows where the defendants sat wearily, glanced out over the court-room audience and saw with a pang of incredulous surprise, in a far corner, the face of Inez Vance. She was not looking at him. She was whispering to a man who sat beside her, and smiling. Jasper looked away.

What was she doing here? What had brought her to Chicago? A visit, perhaps, to some of her rich new friends, of the sort that like to patronize struggling young genius. But why was she *here,* at this trial? In idle curiosity, no doubt. Yes, this was summer, and there were no good shows in town except this. That was why she had come, to look on, smiling, as at a melodrama. That was her way. He knew. These things meant nothing to her. Nothing? That wasn't quite true. These things meant as much to her as anything else did outside her art and her play; nothing of what is called the serious business of life meant very much to her. She would see this trial as she saw the whole human spectacle, with irony, with pity, as though from far away. It meant to her the hopelessness of hope, the folly of heroism, the uselessness of endeavor; it was one more illustration of a tiresome tale that she already knew by heart. Oh, she would be sorry in her remote fashion.

Her presence made him remember what he had forgotten—that there was a world where these things meant no more than that. It was an artists' world, a world of idlers and lookers-on, not of fighters. He had been there, among those idlers, he had been one of them for a moment; now he was back where he belonged, among those who struggle and suffer. He would have forgotten the existence of that queer other world if she had not come back, startlingly, to remind him of it.

He felt a sudden indignation at her presence there. What right had she to bring into this arena of dust and blood her Olympian serenity? This was not a spectacle, to be looked at and enjoyed; this was real. Yes, it was real to them all, judge, prosecutors, defendants. All the world took this seriously. She alone did not.

He wondered abruptly how he could ever for a moment have fancied himself in love with her.

He looked back at her, and their eyes met dizzyingly. At that moment the judge spoke, interrupting a cross-examination:

"The court is adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning." All around men rose to their feet, and talk broke out. Reddy and Mike, at Jasper's side, were telling each other what they thought of the district attorney. One of the lawyers lighted a cigarette. The crowd in the

courtroom began to stream toward the door. The defendants lined up, to be marched out between a guard of bailiffs and detectives. Jasper, one of a lucky few, by virtue of Mrs. Raymond's five thousand dollars, could walk forth a free man till morning. But he lingered, with a confused mind, replying indifferently to the remarks some one was addressing to him. *Why had she come?* Something like hatred filled and smothered him.

As he went out of the door at last, she was standing there, waiting. She took her place at his side, quietly, put her hand gently on his arm, and they walked together out of the building.

"When did you get here?" he asked.

"This noon," she said.

"What are your plans?" he hazarded.

She laughed.

"My plans are vague, as usual. But first of all, I'd like something to eat. The fact is, in my incompetent way, I lost my purse, with what little money I had left, as soon as I arrived. I think I left it in a taxi. Will you take me to dinner?"

"You poor child, of course."

"I shouldn't have taken the taxi, should I? And then I wouldn't have lost my money. But it wasn't very much; that's one comfort." She put her hand in his, and looked into his eyes with that maddeningly simple and direct gaze of hers. "It's good to see you again, Jasper."

The trial receded into the background of his mind. His thoughts whirled about that slight figure at his side. Did she, after all, love him? Strange that at this moment it should seem to matter!

He did not take her to any of the eating-places where he was known. He did not want people to be saying, "That's Jasper Weed, one of the boys on trial, you know." And he did not want Mike and Reddy to hail him eagerly when he came in at the door, and then stare curiously and resentfully at Inez. He did not want them to be asking him to-morrow, "Where in the world did you pick her up?" He did not want to have to attempt to explain her to his friends. She was of a different, an alien, world. In his mind he twisted Swinburne's verses to fit the occasion, "For me the jungle, and you the sea-spray!" To-morrow she would be gone out of this hot world of hate and fighting, into her cool artist's world of serene and lovely contours and colors: and then he need never think about her again.

In the quiet little restaurant by the bridge he forgot everything except how happy he could be with her. They stayed there talking until the waiters began to pile the chairs noisily on the tables. He sighed.

"I suppose we must go. Will you come over to my place? I live just across the bridge."

She rose.

"I imagine you as living on the top floor of some old ramshackle building that is about to be torn down."

"You imagine it very well," he said. "As a matter of fact, I do live on the top floor. And because the building may be torn down any day, I get the place for almost nothing, which is lucky for me." He laughed. "Of course I could always find accommodations with the other boys at the county jail."

"And your key," she said, taking his arm again as they crossed the bridge, "lies on the dusty ledge over the door, just as in Greenwich Village, so that your friends can come in and make themselves at home."

"Not a bad guess," he said.

"I can even guess what one sees inside when one takes down the key and unlocks the door," she said provocatively.

"Can you?"

"A room in fine disorder—"

"That's too easy!"

"And some cartoons from 'Freedom' pinned on the wall—"

"Right."

"And the copy of John Donne I gave you—"

"Of course."

"And—a cheap, unpainted kitchen table for a writing-desk, and sheets and sheets of yellow paper on which you have been writing out your ideas for the improvement of mankind!"

He was startled.

"Have you been there?"

She smiled.

"Perhaps. But here we are."

They climbed the steep, rickety stairs to the top. "Let me!" she said. She felt along the ledge above the door, and took down the key. She unlocked the door, and reached up again to the ledge to put back the key. They went in.

The door shut behind them, and in the darkness he felt her hand touch his shoulder wistfully. With a kind of sob, he clasped her in his arms, and their lips met hungrily.

"You do love me?" he whispered.

"'Ssh!" she warned him.

There was a noisy sound of footsteps on the stairs, and voices. He recognized the voices. It was Mike and Reddy, come to see him. They pounded on the door and called "Hey, Jasper!" A soft hand was pressed over his lips, and he kept silent. But—

"Let's go in and wait for him," said Mike.

The key—it was there on the ledge for them.

Jasper made a movement to free himself from the encompassing arms, but they held him tightly, and lips were pressed against his for silence.

"Key's gone," said Reddy's voice.

"Maybe it's fallen down," said Mike.

There was the sound of a match being struck, and a beam of light crept in under the door.

"It isn't here," said Reddy.

"Well," said Mike, "I guess there's nothing to do but beat it."

The footsteps clattered noisily down the stairs.

"The key—" said Jasper, in a puzzled tone.

"Here it is," whispered Inez, and pressed it into his hand.

"But I thought—"

"You were mistaken. You often are."

He took a step into the darkened room, and his foot struck some strange object. "What's that?" he asked sharply, and stooped down. It felt like a suitcase.

"Do you mind?" asked Inez, softly.

He took her in his arms again, but stopped abruptly.

"One would think you loved me," he said harshly.

"Yes, wouldn't one?" said Inez.

"But do you?" he demanded.

"At least," she said coldly, "I don't hate you."

"That isn't enough," he said.

"Oh, why does a word matter so much?" she cried. "Why do you torment me?"

"It's you," he said, "who are tormenting me."

"Must we have that whole argument over again?" she asked forlornly.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded savagely.

"Oh, Jasper, we're quarreling again! Why did I come? Because—because I was lonely for you, Jasper. And—I thought perhaps you were a little lonely for me. I thought you'd be glad to see me. If you aren't, I'll go away. Do you want me to go away, Jasper?"

"No, vixen!"

"And you won't quarrel with me?"

"I can't promise that."

"Oh, well, quarrel with me if you must. But we don't need the dark for quarrels. Light the lamp."

He struck a match, and stared at her, resentfully. She gazed back at him scornfully. They continued to look at each other, unsteadily, by the light of that flickering match, until it burned up to his fingers and fell to the floor and went out. And then, in the darkness, they found themselves in each other's arms.

They did quarrel, as always. Inez refused to take seriously the struggle between Jasper's

friends and the guardians of capitalist law and order.

"Two sets of virtuous fanatics!" she said impatiently. "Either set would be cruel to make the world better. Only, the others have the power to be cruel, and your crowd hasn't; that's the difference."

"A voice from Olympus!" he mocked.

"Not at all," she said. "The truth is, I've seen so much of *their* cruelties, I'm tired of them; I'd welcome some other kind for a change. But victory is always so ugly! I can sympathize more easily with defeat. Only I know the under dog is just the same kind of dog as the upper dog, really."

"You think, Inez, that I'm just the same sort of animal as that assistant district attorney who's been yelping at us to-day?"

"You both want to make the world better, don't you? He believes in his cause, and perhaps he would die for it. Who knows? Martyrdom would glorify even him, I'm afraid. Yes, I assure you that if your revolution came, and *you* were the stern, self-satisfied, smugly virtuous prosecutor, and *he* the one who was being sent to rot in prison, he would be to me the more appealing figure of the two! Oh, Jasper, don't you see that it's a kind of madness, this wanting to make the world better? The only sane ones are

the dreamers and idlers. At least they don't willfully increase the sum of human misery."

"We can't all be artists, Inez."

"Why not? And who are you to defend the useful life, Jasper? You are a tramp. You have got yourself into a missionary state of mind, but really you are just a tramp. You got converted, and went about converting others, and I'll tell you why: because it gave you a good excuse for keeping on being a tramp. I knew that, when you were telling me all those things about yourself back in Greenwich Village. You called it organizing the seasonal workers; I call it bumming around with the kind of people you like best. They are tramps because they have to be; you, because it's in your blood. But a tramp is a tramp. I know. Am I not one of them? We look at life differently from people who live the year round under the same roof. We are not afraid of things that other people are afraid of. We take chances that other people don't take. We are free, and we don't give a damn. So you stay with us and play with us. You can call it creating a new society within the shell of the old if you want to. But I am more candid. I am not a part of this silly old world, and I have no responsibilities toward it. But you—you seem to have a New England conscience. Is it because you ran away from home, Jasper, and let them

take that house away from your mother? Are you still trying to make it up to her? To be a dutiful son? You want to be good and useful, and yet you can't bear to settle down and be a slave, like every one else. Well, along comes this new gospel, and gives you a chance to risk your neck doing your precious duty to society—and still keep on being a tramp! I'm not making fun of you, Jasper. I love your courage; only I think it's absurd. But I think the United States Government is still more absurd. It thinks you are a danger to society, and wants to lock you up in prison for half a lifetime! Oh, you are all mad; and sometimes I think I am the only sane person alive on this wretched earth!"

And they argued, as before in Greenwich Village, about whether she loved him.

"You *are* like that assistant district attorney, Jasper—the way you cross-question me! You want me to confess that I am guilty of being in love with you; and then you'll sentence me to be faithful to you forever after! Jasper, I tell you I am not that kind of person. I am an idler and a vagabond. I thought you were, too. That was why I liked you!"

"Why are you so stubborn, Inez? Why won't you say—*love!*"

"Because, Jasper, *love* is a word that belongs to the world we don't live in, the world of stability

and order. When people love each other, they get married and settle down and have a family and go to church and believe what they read in the newspapers. They surrender to the world and become a part of it. No, Jasper, I don't love you. And you don't want me to, really. You wouldn't want me to be your wife."

He made a painful grimace.

"I'm scarcely in a position to propose marriage just now, with twenty years in prison hanging over my head. But—if I were free to ask you, I *would* propose marriage. Of course I want you to be my wife, Inez."

"Oh, no, Jasper!" It was like a cry of pain. And then she burst out laughing gayly. "But how absurd!"

"I know it's absurd," he said stiffly. "As you have taken pains to remind me, I'm a tramp. I shall have nothing to support a wife on, even if I am lucky enough not to get sent to prison. All that you say is true—I've been a bum. But I don't want to be a bum all my life."

"Oh, but I want you to, Jasper dear!" she cried. "And—and—that's not what I meant! Do you think I would marry you if you had a job and money and could support me?"

"If you loved me," he said.

She sighed.

"Well, we've agreed that I don't, so that's out of the question."

"It's out of the question for practical reasons," he said, "but the principle of the thing remains the same."

"Good!" she said cheerfully, reaching under her pillow for another cigarette. "Let's quarrel about the principle of the thing!"

The world was at war, and the destiny of nations was at stake. The freedom of a hundred men was being weighed in scales by a carefully blindfolded goddess, and one of these men was Jasper Weed. But all this seemed remote to them now. Love was their theme. They hurt each other with cruel words, and sought passionately to heal those hurts with kisses.

And it seemed that the debate was not waged in vain. As the trial ended, Inez Vance wavered irresolutely in her defense of freedom. On the night the jury went out to decide the fate of the accused, Inez Vance wept. And from her tears she whispered presently:

"Oh, Jasper, I do love you!"

"Stubborn girl! I knew it!" he answered.

"I suppose," she said spitefully, "you think it is worth while going to prison just to wring that admission from me!"

"Well worth it," he said, laughing. "I shall go to prison happy."

That may have been a lover's extravagance, but they were happy, lyrically happy. Others may have waited with anxious hearts for the jury's verdict. They did not seem to care.

The jury brought in its verdict of "Guilty" against ninety-eight men, including Jasper Weed. And that night, so paradoxically ran the course of their vagabond love, Jasper and Inez became engaged.

"I know it's silly," said Inez, "but since we *are* honestly in love, let's declare it to each other in the usual way."

"We ought to have a ring," said Jasper, gravely, wondering where he could borrow the money.

"Let *me* give *you* a ring," said Inez, and took one of quaint workmanship from her finger and slipped it on his. It would only go on his little finger. "With this I give you my heart," she whispered, "forever."

They kissed each other solemnly.

The judge was to pronounce sentence. That morning, absurdly and beautifully and defiantly, they went to the city hall and were married. That afternoon Jasper Weed sat in his place among the defendants, and Inez in a corner of the court-room, and heard the white-haired judge pronounce sentence: "Jasper Weed, twenty years in prison."

"And now that this trial is over," said Jasper that night, "I can go and look for a job."

"Look for a job!" Inez echoed in amazement.

"Yes. I've been talking with our lawyers. I won't have to go to prison for a while, perhaps not for a long time. You see, the case is being appealed. It will go clear up to the Supreme Court, and that takes time—perhaps a year or more."

Inez Vance looked thoughtful.

Jasper looked for work, and so did Inez. She made a precarious living at that time doing various kinds of hack commercial art-work, at which she was very clever. She presently found something to do for a department store. In order to do this work, she had to have a place of her own. Her key did not repose over the ledge of her door as an invitation to idle friends. Nevertheless, she was sometimes at home to Jasper and others.

The change was disconcerting to Jasper. He did not complain, because the things that came into his mind to say were rather too bitter. He contented himself with taking the ring from his little finger, and keeping it in his pocket. If she noticed its absence, she did not mention it. Not being able to say the things in his heart, he said little or nothing. He must have been poor company.

He told himself that his nerves were all on edge. When he had a job, he would be better able to deal with the situation.

But before he got a job, Inez had finished her pictures, turned them in, and received the check; and now, she told him casually, as though it were news in which a good friend of hers would be interested, she was going back to New York.

"That so?" he said as politely as he could.

He did not come to her place again; but a few days later, on returning home from job-hunting, he found a note slipped under his door, saying she was sorry she hadn't been able to see him to say good-by. It was a friendly note. "If you should come to New York again," it ended, "be sure to come and see me. I shall be at my old address."

He wrote her a letter full of angry reproach, and mailed it, and next day hopped a freight eastward. A week later he walked up the stairs and stopped in front of her door in Greenwich Village. He was wearing a ring of quaint workmanship on his little finger.

The door was slightly ajar. He knocked, and when there was no answer, he pushed it open and entered. The room was empty. But there was a book lying open on the couch, as though she had just been reading and had laid it down. He walked over and looked frowningly at it, as if

seeking for an omen. It was a book of poems, and there was a black pencil mark beside one of the stanzas. He knelt and read:

"I shall not bargain with you, knowing well
How futile were the effort to make over
Me, skeptic, vagabond, rebel and infidel,
Into the pattern of a perfect lover!"

"I guess you are right," he murmured, and took the ring from his little finger and laid it on the page of the open book. Then he went out, leaving the door ajar as he had found it.

That is doubtless where the story should end. But there yet remains one more episode to be told. The time is three years later, and the place Mrs. Raymond's house on Long Island. The war of the nations was over, and people were trying to forget it. And the case of the men convicted in Chicago had at last reached the Supreme Court in vain. Word had gone out for those on bond to surrender themselves within a week to the authorities. All but three had already done so, and there were newspaper stories to the effect that these three men would try to escape from the country and go to Soviet Russia, under instructions from the Third International. One of these three men was Jasper Weed. Mrs. Ray-

mond was naturally interested. In fact, she and her guests were talking about it that April evening. By an odd chance, one of these guests happened to be connected with the Department of Justice; he was assuring Mrs. Raymond that her five thousand dollars were gone. Another of the guests, Inez Vance, now becoming a celebrity, had smiled and made no comment. It was at this point that the bell rang, and the maid returned to tell Mrs. Raymond that a "Mr. Jimson" wished to see her.

"Jimson?" repeated Mrs. Raymond, wonderingly. She didn't remember the name; but a curious look that flitted across Inez Vance's face seemed to signify that he was some one she knew. "Bring him in," she said. Then Inez Vance frowned anxiously, and instantly Mrs. Raymond's mind made the association: Jimson—Weed, of course! She rose, a little fluttered.

He entered the room, smiling. Yes, it was Jasper Weed, instantly recognizable despite his absurd beard and still more absurd horn-rimmed spectacles.

"How do you do, Mr. Jimson!" she said warmly, and shook his hand. "I'm so glad you could come. I believe you know Miss Vance?"

"Of course. How are you, Mr. Jimson?" said Inez, coolly.

Mrs. Raymond remained nervous until she had

managed to mention, in introducing Mr. Parbetter, that he had been telling them such interesting things about his work in the Department of Justice; the other introductions were easier, for she was sure none of these people had ever been in Greenwich Village or seen Jasper Weed. She took a breath of relief. "Crudely done!" she thought to herself; "I show my excitement too much. I would never make a good conspirator!" But perhaps she was wrong; for, having seen the introductions successfully through, she settled down to an interesting evening.

It *was* interesting. Mrs. Raymond was afterward heard to say that she had had five thousand dollars' worth of excitement and fun that evening. For the case of Jasper Weed continued to be the topic of conversation. The gentleman from the Department of Justice, under skillful coaxing from Inez Vance, related to them the true history of Jasper Weed, as it stood in the secret files of the department. It appeared that Jasper Weed's real name was Joseph Widinsky, that he was born in Riga, that he had figured in the Russian revolutionary uprising of 1905, that he had been with Lenin in Switzerland, and had been sent to this country to stir up a labor rebellion.

"Those," said Mr. Parbetter, "are the real facts of the case!"

"How exciting!" said Inez Vance.

As it happened, the question of Mrs. Raymond's five thousand dollars came up for discussion again. Mr. Parbetter again assured her that it was lost.

"Of course," said Mr. Jimson, mildly, "there are still a few hours of grace, I believe. The week is up to-night. If he surrenders himself to the authorities before midnight, your bail is safe, Mrs. Raymond. And how do you know but that he may be intending to do just that?"

"If he did," said Mrs. Raymond, sharply, "I'd think him a fool. What is five thousand dollars beside twenty years of a boy's life? I should hate to believe that was what he thought of me! So far as I am concerned, I wish him luck in getting to Russia!"

Inez Vance laughed softly.

"The question is," she said, "what does Russia want of him?"

"You are right," laughed Mr. Jimson; "that *is* the question. Why should Russia regard him as a useful person? After all, what is he? Nothing but a bum!"

"If you knew him as well as I do," said Mr. Parbetter, gravely, "you would not think it a joking matter."

"Tell us more, Mr. Parbetter," urged Inez Vance.

Mr. Parbetter complied with her request, and the company was thrilled with the desperate deeds of Joseph Widinsky, *alias* Jasper Weed. It was late when Mr. Parbetter and the other guests took their leave. Mr. Jimson and Inez Vance remained.

When they were all gone, Jasper took out his watch.

"It's fifteen minutes to twelve," he said. "There's still time to call up the police station—"

"Don't be an idiot, Jasper!" said Mrs. Raymond, and put an arm affectionately about him. "I'm sure I don't know how you ever got mixed up in this crazy mess, but I want you to get out of it. The idea of your going to prison!"

Then, having sent the maids to bed, she took Jasper and Inez out into the kitchen, and they rummaged in the ice-box and made sandwiches for themselves and talked about old times in Greenwich Village.

"Of course you're going to let me put you up for the night?" she said to Jasper.

"Yes, if you don't mind my leaving before breakfast. If I'm going to Russia, my program from now on is laid out for me."

Mrs. Raymond picked up the kitchen clock.

"This has an alarm. Take it with you. And if you're going so early, you must get some sleep.

Good night, Jasper, and good-by, and good luck!" She kissed him. Her glance dwelt for a moment on Inez. "Show him his room, darling, the one over the garden, while I lock up the house."

"This is your room," said Inez, and went over and drew aside the curtain. "How sweet the flowers are! Their odors seem mixed with moonlight."

He breathed in their fragrance.

"Everything I look at is precious to me just now," he said. "Absurd as it may seem, I love my country. I keep thinking I may not see it again—ever."

"Jasper," said Inez, "what are you going to do in Russia?"

"Try to make myself useful," he said. "There's a whole new civilization to help build up. I know you think of me as useless, but I should like to be something else."

She put her arm about him.

"You poor darling!" she said. "Of course you are useless. That's what I like about you!"

"Why did you run away from me?" he asked abruptly.

"Because that's the sort of person I am," she said softly.

"Then—why did you—"

"Why did I marry you? It was wrong to do that, wasn't it? But—I thought you were going

off to prison. I wanted to make you happy."

"I *was* happy," he said.

"Can you forgive me, Jasper?"

"For making me happy? Yes. I can forgive you anything."

"And will you believe me if I tell you something?"

"Yes. Tell me."

"If you won't ask me to—go to Russia with you and help you build up a new civilization, or something useful and absurd like that, I'll tell you that I love you now, Jasper."

"I don't think I'd take you to Russia with me if I could," he replied.

"I'm so glad!" she said. "You are being sensible, Jasper, at last."

"I must wind my alarm-clock," he said. "That will remind me in time that life is real, and that I am a citizen of the world, with duties awaiting me for which I shall eventually get hanged or shot. You are making me forget these things already."

"Forget them, then," she urged. "Forget them for a little while, and be my playmate again!"

The moonlight shone into the room.

Oh, doubtless the alarm-clock will ring at the appointed hour, sending a man into exile, fol-

lowed by derision and contempt, to live and die with irrelevant heroism in some strange place. But not yet.

"And here a while, where no wind brings
The baying of a pack athirst,
May sleep the sleep of blessèd things
The blood too bright, the brow accurst."

THE BALLAD OF CHRISTOPHER STREET

"Is it still there, I wonder, down in Christopher Street,
That little rickety house of ours where life was young and sweet?"
No, my dear, they've torn it down, a year and a day ago;
There's nothing there but an empty lot where the purple burdocks grow.
The wreckers came, and spat on their hands, and gave it a final thrust,
And the roof fell into the cellar, and the walls went up in dust!
The boys have carried away the boards to kindle their mothers' fires,
And over the moldering fragments creep burdocks and briers.
So it will stay for a year and a day: and then some morning soon,
Builders will come, with riveters, and rivet loud till noon,
And call it a day, and go away, leaving against the sky
A great brand-new apartment-building fourteen stories high.

And women with dogs, and men with cars, will
quarrel and sleep and eat,
After the fashion of their kind, at Eleven Chris-
topher Street.
For the days that we knew are dead, my dear,
and never in all time's turning
Shall there burn in the hearts of Christopher
Street the fires that we felt burning
When in that little house of ours life still stayed
young and sweet
Though all the world was bitter-black outside of
Christopher Street,
And those four rickety walls of ours gave love
and kindness room
When all mankind was mad and blind and raging
to its doom!

O, in that big apartment-building up against the
sky
There'll be lovers, lovers, lovers—never you
and I!
It will not matter to them in the least, if out
of the dust and grime
Impossible beauty flamed and flowered, once upon
a time!
If a boy and a girl for a year and a day laughed
bravely at despair,
No one will know in Christopher Street, and cer-
tainly none will care.

But you and I, shall we ever forget, till our hearts
forget to beat,
The year and a day of life in flower that we had
in Christopher Street?

Wakened by the jingling-harnessed, trampling
teams from next-door's stable,
Lingering late in happy laughter over the bright
breakfast table,
Sharing every secret fancy, finding courage and
delight
In each other's jests and kisses, sitting up all
hours of night
In deep talk before the fireplace—happy that we
could remember
One more lovely story always to outlast the final
ember!
Then kisses in the darkness, laughter in the night,
And a white moon rising over the roofs to look
on our delight!
Blood-madness was upon mankind: two sane
ones, you and I
Could laugh and talk and dream, and let the
legions thunder by!
All that was ever good in life, all that was ever
sweet,
Kept house with us for a year and a day in Eleven
Christopher Street.

A painted cupboard on the wall, colored cups and dishes—
Tulip-garden crockery to match our happiest wishes!—
A Japanese print, and a candlestick, with candles burning bright,
Curtain-folds of sunny gold at windows left and right,
A couch with tattered tapestry, a cigarette-scarred table,
A view from either window of an alley and a stable,
Ash-trays scattered round about in all the likely nooks,
And everywhere, on shelf and chair—books, books, books!
Brave poetry, radiant science, mockery's gayest flights,
Books full of rebel courage and wisdoms and delights—
Though all the world was loud with lies, and guns boomed down the truth,
They spoke the things that none might speak to the listening mind of youth,
They told the truth of an evil time to a lonely girl and boy,
Saying: Be scornful of the world, but have no scorn of joy!

So they spoke in the little house by flickering candle-flame
To a grave-browed girl with dancing eyes and a boy that bore my name.
With books and dishes, fire and a bed, the heart's deep needs were there—
A garden it was, and a palace, and a fortress against despair!

I remember the way we found it, when our love was fire-new,
And we were troubled, and bold, and shy, wondering what to do;
Night after night we had walked the streets, through blasts of wind and snow,
Wanting a place to call our own, a roof to sleep below—
And some folks thought it funny, and laughed aloud to spy
Huddling close in doorways, two lovers, you and I!
Pooling our desperate fortunes, all we could scrape together,
We sought to find our love four walls against the bitter weather;
We only hoped for an eyrie high over the street's abyss,
A room for two, where we'd have the right to laugh and talk and kiss;

Ah! happy the chance that led us, at last, with tired feet,
Across the snowy door-sill of Eleven Christopher Street.
We stood by the little fireplace, and in each other's eyes
We watched the bright tears welling up in wonder and surprise.
Here we knew was a home for us, and not for us too narrow—
We furnished the place from a junk-shop quick and moved in a big wheelbarrow!
And I tacked up my Japanese print, while you, with your candles lit,
Sat on the tattered-tapestried couch and laughed for the joy of it.
The logs were ablaze in the fireplace, the coffee was bubbling in the pot,
And your eyes in the mellow candle-light some deep new radiance got.
Soon you knelt to tend the fire, and I glimpsed through a half-shut door
Your dresses flung across a chair, your slippers on the floor.
And so may all dear lovers that are starved for love's delight
Find rest and peace, and food and fire, and a kind bed at night!

In that big apartment-building underneath the moon,
Something of our love may linger, like a ghostly tune;
Troubled wives will wake at midnight, hearing from the rafter
Thin and faint, the silver echoes of delicious laughter.
At these glimmering hints and shadowings of our lost delight
They will frown and they will wonder, in the haunted night;
Tossing on their pillows while the midnight minutes creep,
They will think about love, a little—and then go back to sleep.
And over their lawful slumbers, in silvery disdain,
Your airy mocking laughter will chime through the night again.
For who would ever have dared to dream, in the days that were so sweet,
That love could be dull and expensive at Eleven Christopher Street!
(Oh, it's little we asked of the niggard fates that ruled our vagabond life—
Only a time for tenderness out of the bitter strife!

The endless burgeonings of love, its calm perennial flowers,
We might not claim, in a world like this, for driven hearts like ours;
Rash, rebel children of our time, wild lovers of lost truth,
We might not make the immemorial promises of youth—
Yet we believed that ours was love, so sweet it was and gay,
The passionate, kind comradeship that we had for a year and a day!
No—it wasn't the prosperous love that builds men's cities and makes men's wars,
But it gave peace to a lonely two beneath the eternal stars.
And the loud, proud makers of cities and wars, when they have counted the cost,
Shall they dare to call this love of ours too lawless and too lost?)

It stands no more in the sight of men, in the traffic's roar and beat,
The little rickety house of ours where life was young and sweet;
There's nothing left but an empty lot, and a stray board, and a brick,
And—you've the Japanese print, my dear, and I've the candlestick;

The world is wide, with many a path that's
pleasant to the feet,
But none that will ever turn back again to Eleven
Christopher Street;
Time has triumphed, and earth's deep dust has
claimed its ancient right
To be enriched with our memories of laughter and
delight;
There's nothing to do, there's nothing to say—
except that life was sweet
To a boy and a girl for a year and a day in
Eleven Christopher Street.

VI. A Piece of Slag

This is all I know of art:
  Troubled men of other days
Distilled the poisons of the heart
  And sealed them in some perfect phrase.

Here's a thing for me to do,
  Me that hold myself so clever—
Seal up my memories of you
  To medicine men's hearts forever!

A Piece of Slag

MY friend is a writer of stories, but he does not write true stories of life as he has lived and seen it. He saves those stories for the long evenings of talk with his friends. Once I reproached him, saying that life as he told of it in reminiscence was so much more rich and varied than the accounts he gave of it in his fiction.

"That is just the trouble," he replied, "it is too rich, too varied—it is chaos. People go to art to find meanings. So I rearrange little bits of life's chaos into a pretty pattern—something that has a beginning and an end—a fairy-tale, if you like! People, you think, are tired of fairy-tales nowadays. But they aren't. Why don't I try, and find out? I *have* tried, I *have* found out! I'll tell you a story—a story that can't be written. Try it yourself, if you like! I make you a present of it. Only don't go and prettify it—don't leave out the brutalities. I can do that myself! I can change it around, and doll it up, so that it won't hurt anybody's feelings. Tell it straight. Yes, I'd like to see what you can do with it. *I* can't write it. Here's your chance.

"It begins—I don't know how it begins. But there's a fellow in it like me—like you. Mind you, when you write the story, don't make him a villain or a fool. Perhaps we *are* villains and fools, but we don't seem so to our friends. We seem nice, decent people. That's the point. This thing didn't happen to Benvenuto Cellini, or Casanova; it happened to one of ourselves, a young fellow of twenty-six, in New York City. We'll call his name Terence. He was a poet.

"Terence had been having a love-affair, one that meant a lot to him, and not so much to the girl. He had tried to make it mean something to her—he wanted to marry her. But she couldn't see it that way. It wasn't because Terence was poor and a poet—it was just because she didn't love him enough. Don't you go blaming anything on *her* when you write the story! Besides, she doesn't really come into it. Yet she's important, too, as the background. This wasn't a thing which could have happened to Terence if he hadn't been trying to get over being in love with that girl.

"For a little while he thought she really did love him. That was just before he went into the army. Terence hated wars, but he was conscripted, and rather bewilderedly went. Before he went—she was a generous person, after her fashion—she wanted to make him happy; and she did. It was

a lovely thing for her to do,—thinking that Terence might be killed, and anyway, that he'd have plenty of time to get over being crazy about her. She had no idea he would be back on her doorstep in a couple of weeks.

"For some reason, he was rejected, after he had been at the army camp two weeks. So there he was, in New York again, feeling rather at a loss as he tried to pick up and piece together a life that he had left behind as if for ever. He had no job, of course, and no money—for he had spent and given away the little he had, before he left—no money except his army pay for two weeks. No place to live. And no girl either, it appeared.

"He went to see her first of all, of course. She didn't seem glad he was back, merely surprised and ill-at-ease. He felt as though he were committing some emotional *faux pas* by coming back. The story had ended, for her, dramatically and beautifully, two weeks ago; this was one of those stupid sequels that no intelligent person wants to read. . . . He said to himself that he was perhaps being over-sensitive. She was sorry for his 'poor arm,' noting that he winced as she touched it. She wanted to see it, cried out indignantly at the ugly vaccination-sore only half disguised by its bandage, shuddered, covered it up hastily, and laid her cool cheek against his wrist comfortingly for a moment. But that meant nothing. She

could be sorry for anybody's poor arm; and just as comforting. 'Why didn't you write to me?' he asked.

"She frowned. 'Well, I did start a letter to you,' she said. 'I never finished it. It's here somewhere, if you want to see it.' She fished it out, a sheet of note-paper half covered with writing. He took it eagerly. It was a cool account of various pleasant social activities, changing suddenly to a tone of enthusiasm as she began to describe a young prize-fighter she had met at a swimming-party: something about the way the muscles rippled under his satiny skin. Well, Terence knew she was like that; it didn't exactly surprise him. But he was thinking of how he would have felt if he *had* received that letter. There isn't any lonelier place on earth than the first two weeks of an army camp. He crumpled up the letter and threw it on the floor. 'You see,' she said, 'I'm really no good as a correspondent.'

"Abruptly he began to tell her about a dream he had in camp. For some reason he hadn't wanted to take any books of poetry with him; instead, he had taken a trigonometry text-book, some squared paper, and—I forget what you call that metal thing that has degrees marked on a half-circle—and solaced himself with sines and cosines. And one night he had a dream. He was measuring the hard and abrupt and deadly

angles of his own coffin, desperately trying to find some answer except the inevitable one. And then, it seemed, he had found it, for the dream changed to the solemn naked embrace of a girl—an erotic dream into which the trigonometry nevertheless persisted, for it was as though now he were triumphantly working out that baffling problem of his own human destiny in terms of the gracious, suave, tender angles (for so he thought of them) of a girl's body. A starkly erotic dream-fantasy, but something more, too—a solemn procreative mystery, in which he was finding the mathematical, the trigonometrical solution of the great problem of death; and that solution—it seemed to him, as indeed to him it was, a new and dazzling discovery—was the creation of new life, the promise of its emergence, in defiance of death, out of this gracious and tender loveliness of a girl's body: life that he had created, life that was his own! And then, in his dream, a gray, hooded, Norn-like figure appeared, and recited this rune: 'Find the cosine of the womb ere the cosine of the tomb!' . . . He told the girl the story of the dream. He knew that she would understand. 'And the next morning,' he said, 'I was handed my papers; and I came back—here.' He didn't say 'to you'; she knew that. She knew all that he could tell her; in his eyes, plain for her to read, was the question: 'Will you be the mother

of my child?' She looked into his eyes, and then looked away.

"He was standing there, waiting for his answer.

"And at last she said softly: 'It's beautiful. Why don't you put it in a poem?'

"And that didn't surprise him, either. He knew her pretty well.

"But he had had his answer. So he went away. . . .

"He said to himself: 'Now that it's all over, it's stupid of me to go on being in love with this girl. I will stop. I won't see her any more. I won't think about her, if I can help it. No, it won't hurt like this for ever. I'll get over it.'

"That is the background of this story. But, if it is going to be a true story, you must not think of Terence as a Tennysonian young lover. He wasn't in the least going to remain faithful to her memory. He was going back to the Greenwich Village life which had been temporarily blotted out for him by his passionate interest in her. Here was a little world, full of gayety and freedom, of ambition and work and play, where such things as love were not taken with a tragic seriousness. To this care-free world he deliberately turned his mind; but his thoughts did not, at the moment, dwell on it with any pleasure. It seemed to him, now, that the Village was so care-

less of love simply because it was so full of heart-broken people, to whom nothing mattered. Oh, yes, doubtless, for every broken-hearted boy there was a broken-hearted girl, ready to make merry. And since there are so many beautiful things in life besides true love, since there are candor and beauty and admiration and pity and pleasure to be shared together, these light-hearted moments were not to be despised. They were, no doubt, good medicine for a broken heart. Doubtless he would avail himself later of these comforts. But just now he was in no mood for them. He remembered that he had no place to live, and no job. He hunted up a friend who had a spare bunk, and went out to look for a job.

"He didn't find a job, and didn't find a job. But meanwhile he had credit at the Village restaurants; he was in no danger of starving. And late one afternoon, when he had gone into a magazine office and learned that there was no opening, he was followed out to the elevator by a young man, who said diffidently, 'I know who you are, and I heard you asking for work. If you aren't particular, you might possibly be interested in a job I know about. It's a poor job—I used to have it myself. I happen to know it's open, and I'd be glad to take you around and introduce you now, if you like. My name is—' Oh, we'll call him Paul.

"Terence thanked him, and waited while he got his hat. He liked this boy, Paul; for he seemed a boy to Terence. 'How old are you?' he asked, as they started off on their errand. 'Twenty-one,' said Paul, 'and I know what it is to be out of a job.'

"They interviewed the editor, and it looked as if something might come of it, though nothing ever did. Terence thanked him again, thinking how much he seemed like himself at twenty-one. An idealist if there ever was one, with those delicate chiseled features, that sensitive mouth, that proud forehead, those candid blue eyes—and with such a lot still to learn about the world! Terence felt infinitely harder, coarser, and wiser, with his few more years.

"They halted, before parting, on the corner. It appeared that this boy admired Terence immensely—his poetry, his articles, and the little book he had published. And, diffidently, the boy said at last, 'I wonder if you'd care to come and have dinner with me and my wife. She'd be terribly glad. . . .' So he was married!

"Terence said he'd like to come. The boy went to a cigar-store and telephoned to her. They went to a butcher-shop where Paul bought some chops, and Terence stepped into a delicatessen next door and bought some salty brown olives, and so to Paul's apartment, three floors up some-

where. 'This is Kitty,' said Paul; and Terence, shaking hands with the pretty, slender, gray-eyed young thing, was glad Paul had such a nice girl for a wife. He hoped they were happy: he couldn't be sure, for he knew that a very young idealist doesn't always manage such things well. . . .

"It was a pleasant dinner; Kitty was one of Terence's admirers, too—they both treated him rather as if he were a great personage. Not too much so—for they were hungry for friendship, and they wanted him as a friend. They loved talk quite as much as Terence did, and that evening they sat up till late, talking about everything in the world. Paul's was a heroically and pathetically logical mind; he wanted to get everything into neat and orderly categories; he seemed to think there were such things as Truths, to be arrived at by syllogistic reasoning. ('Myself when young!' thought Terence.) Kitty was more pleasantly human; she wanted to run off the path of discourse in every direction, picking the flowers of wit and chasing the butterflies of fancy. Paul would frown gently, and be patient, never forgetting his train of thought. There was something merciless and absurd and quaint about his mind. He was the sort of young man who could easily be a revolutionist or a martyr. Terence would sidetrack the argument for the sake of

giving pleasure to Kitty; he recited snatches of poetry for her, and made foolish little jokes, while Paul waited with the next clause of his syllogism ready to utter. 'What a pity he is too young and too cursedly intellectual to play with her!' thought Terence. Nevertheless, he loved Paul for his absurd seriousness.

"In fact, they were all rather enchanted with each other, and never wanted to stop talking. When they urged Terence to spend the rest of the night there on the couch of the living-room, he laughingly admitted that he had no real home, and stayed. Kitty made up the couch for sleeping, and when their guest was in bed and they were ready for bed they came back and talked some more.

"Terence, you see, had inveigled Kitty into telling the story of their romance, culminating in their idyllic early marriage when neither of them had a cent. But Kitty's romanticism, and Terence's applause, had troubled Paul, and he had come back now to put in the realistic touches to the story. 'Life,' said Paul, 'isn't like a Broadway play.' Paul's ambition was to be a realistic and satiric dramatist, and 'Broadway' was a term of offensive comparison upon his lips. 'No, life didn't end for us with the wedding-bells. Marriage isn't a solution of life's problems—least of all for people like ourselves. It's a new prob-

lem, the hardest problem of all. It involves the whole question of the individual versus the herd —of freedom versus convention.'

"Terence glanced at Kitty, sitting there on the edge of the couch with an old dressing-gown clasped together over her night-dress, one bare foot drawn up under her, and her dark hair down her back—very much like a little girl. It seemed all wrong that she should have to think of marriage as a problem. She deserved to have it remain an idyl. But these young male idealists—of course they couldn't ever let well enough alone! 'Why bother,' said Terence, 'about freedom? Happiness is much better, if you only knew it!'

"Paul shook his head. 'That,' he said, 'is what I want to take up with you. I've been rather surprised at some of the things you've said this evening. I've always thought of you as one of the real and thoroughgoing believers in freedom. At least, that ideal is implicit in everything you write. But—in your talk there is a touch of disillusion and cynicism. You speak as though you didn't believe in freedom any more.'

"Terence laughed. 'It's true, I'm getting to be an old fogey,' he said. 'It happens to the best of us, you know! You wait a few years more, Paul, and you'll see. Youth is the time when we throw happiness away for the sake of some idea. Later we realize how rare happiness is, and be-

gin to cherish it—usually too late,' he added, smiling at Kitty.

"But Paul was very much in earnest. 'I don't believe for a moment that it's a matter of age,' he said. 'If I thought I should ever go back on my ideas, I'd—well, I'd commit suicide beforehand. It's just a matter of courage. Of knowledge, first—knowledge that the herd *isn't* right in the stupid laws it lays down for us. And then of courage—daring to live up to our knowledge of the truth. We needn't become like everybody else. We can keep our freedom.'

"Terence asked: 'Just what are we talking about?' And Paul answered: 'We are talking about freedom. If these things are true in a poem, they're true in real life. They're true now; it isn't just a dreamer's vision of the future. It's something all lovers can experience—if only they know the truth and aren't afraid of the opinions of the herd.'

"Terence thought again: 'How like this boy is to myself of a few years ago!' Aloud, he said: 'Perhaps you mean free love. I'm not sure . . .' A little scornfully, Paul replied, 'Yes, of course I mean free love.'

"Terence looked at them, smiling, and then looked away. They were so young, and so beautiful, both of them; such glorious children! He envied them for a moment—that they were young

enough to talk of such a terrible thing as freedom! He had been as young as that once. . . . And then he felt sorry for them. It would hurt them, to learn—not what the world was like, they knew that already—but what they were like, themselves. It seemed too bad: these lovely young people—surely they weren't going to inflict upon each other the horrid cruelty of trying to live up to that ideal! . . . He looked back at Paul, so utterly sincere, so calm in his hard bright theoretical wisdom, so much a young Olympian; and over at Kitty, whose eyes were fixed upon Paul with admiration and a touch of worship.

"Yes, confound it, that girl would believe anything that boy told her! And yet she knew better. Her admiration of his courageous theorizing was an admiration of an alien thing, of something she thought superior to her own frail nature. . . . Terence put his hand on hers for a moment, a friendly and tender gesture, as if to beg forgiveness for this silly argument; then, turning to Paul mockingly, he asked: 'And Kitty—she believes in free love too, I suppose?'

"She was looking at Terence, startled, not at what he said, but at something else awakened by the touch of his hand; her eyes seemed for a moment to let him into their depths; she turned pale, and then flushed crimson, and drew her dressing-gown tightly about her throat. Paul prompted

her impatiently: 'Well, Kitty, speak up for yourself; do you believe in free love—yes or no?'

"She recovered from her confusion. As if braced by Paul's impatience, she came back into the discussion. 'Yes,' she said quietly, 'I believe in freedom, too.'

"Terence smiled. 'It's a pretty theory,' he said. He was speaking to Paul; and Paul very calmly answered, 'I have put it into practice.'

"Terence couldn't look at Kitty for a moment; he was afraid he would see her wince. . . . Paul went on speaking. 'We all know,' he said, 'that marriage has no supernatural magic to keep people from being interested, emotionally and physically, in others. We know that such attractions occur, and that people are sometimes unable to resist them even when they believe they are doing wrong. You would not be surprised or shocked if I confessed to you, in a bar-room, that I had once been unfaithful to my wife. Why should you look so ashamed because I tell you frankly in her presence that I have had a love-affair since my marriage? At least, you see I am not afraid to put my theories into practice."

Terence looked up at Kitty while he was speaking, and saw that her eyes were fixed upon her husband in that gaze of admiration, that tribute from an inferior to a superior being! He felt obliged to demand of her brutally: 'And you,

Kitty?' She looked down. 'No, I haven't,' she whispered. 'Ah!' said Terence.

"Paul, it seemed, never grew really angry. He only said: 'I know what you mean. You think that it's only an idealistic pretense,—that I have all the freedom, and my wife none. I assure you it isn't so. She is as free as I am—freer, in fact; for I shouldn't be jealous' Terence turned to Kitty and said in mock astonishment: 'What! were you jealous?' 'Yes,' she answered bravely, 'I was. But I tried not to be. And—and I was very glad he hadn't lied to me about it. I shouldn't want him ever to have to lie to me about such things. So—I tried to get over feeling bad about it—and I did, after a while. He was disappointed in me because I cried. But I couldn't help that. I'm not as noble as he is.' 'You think he's really so noble?' 'Of course!' she said. 'She means,' Paul explained, 'merely that I am not possessive. It would be a simple and natural thing for me to live up to my ideas.' Terence laughed. 'How do you know what you are like?' he demanded.

"Suddenly he began to tell Paul, in as vivid detail as was consonant with what was, after all, merely an intellectual discussion, how he would really feel if he put his theory to that test. . . . But at the end, Paul only said, 'I should despise myself if I were the kind of man who couldn't give the woman he loved the same freedom he

demanded of her. No—I couldn't bear the knowledge that she had to deny herself a happiness, out of pity for me.'

"Can you see why, loving this boy, Terence wanted to hurt him?—because he was so young, so foolish, so ignorantly cruel and careless with love, so much his own dead youthful self! He wanted to hurt this boy, and make him wise—hurt him, as he himself had been hurt by life—give him the wisdom that he himself had got from life's hurts. . . . 'How do you know,' he asked maliciously, 'that Kitty hasn't refrained from demonstrating her freedom just for that very reason?—because she's afraid, secretly afraid, that you're not so Olympian after all. She's in awe of you, Paul. She wants to believe in you. But she doesn't want to take any risks. You might turn out to be made of very common clay, like all the rest of us! Then she'd have to despise you. She could never forget all your noble attitudes—and how scornful you were of her when she cried a little. No—she'd better not take the freedom you offer her with such a generous gesture. She'd better remain an old-fashioned wife, and let you be an old-fashioned husband with a new line of excuses. . . . And now, if you please, I'm going to sleep!'

"He heard them talking in the bedroom long after their lights were out. Apparently that last

barb had rankled! Paul would wonder if it were true that Kitty distrusted his nobility: a wound in his vanity! Terence smiled with contented malice, and slept . . . and breakfasted cheerfully with them the next morning, helped Kitty wash the dishes after Paul had gone, and talked with her about poetry a while, and then went away.

"Kitty had said, 'You will come again, soon, won't you?' and Paul had said shyly, 'I hope we'll have some more talks,' and he had assured them both that he would come. But he didn't go again for weeks and weeks; in the meantime he had written a few things and made a little money, and moved his books and typewriter into a cheap room on an alley, next to a livery-stable. . . . He managed not to go to see that girl—the one who had said of his dream, 'why don't you put it into a poem?' The ache for her was fading slowly out of his heart and bones; sometimes the old feeling woke and throbbed; sometimes it all came back for an unendurable hour as fresh as new, after something—a young moon, a white rose, a strain of music—reminded him too powerfully of her; but it was going, and soon, soon, it would be all gone. He didn't like to go to parties for fear of meeting her; and he was intolerably lonely in his hot, noisy little room on the alley.

"He often thought of going up to see Paul and Kitty. He liked them tremendously, none the less

that they were such darling fools over their theories of 'freedom.' They would wonder why he never came; and Paul, so sensitive under that calm Olympian exterior of his, would say to Kitty, 'He didn't really like us, after all; he only let us think he did.' But, confound it, Terence did like them! The reason he didn't go was that he had remembered the look exchanged between him and Kitty there on the couch. He knew well enough what that look meant—it meant that they had wanted, in that moment, desperately, to kiss each other. . . . It had been a moment entirely away from that silly argument; it had been born of a mutual desire to escape from the arid intellectuality of logical disputation,—of a wish to join hands and run away into the green fields of life and beauty. Poor girl, she had doubtless been argued with day and night all these years of her young marriage! And she had felt in Terence a passion for the same things in life that she cared for—the things that can't be argued about. She had felt his tenderness, his affection, and her heart had suddenly opened to him like a flower. It had been a surprise to them both: it was a moment in which they stood nakedly revealed to each other as people between whom there is love and all its possibilities. And that was all right—this would be a poor world if there weren't such moments in the lives of men and women. They

made friendships lovelier and sweeter. There was no need to be frightened of such things. Just because two people wanted to kiss each other was no sufficient reason for their doing so; and it was sometimes—as in this present instance, notably—an excellent reason for their not doing anything of the kind! Those two young people were in an explosive state. He knew better than to kiss that girl. But if he went again, he would want to—and because he was sick, sick with old memories that wouldn't quite die in his mind, there would be an ineffable healing in the touch of her lips. She was sick, too, with hurt love. She would want to be kissed. And then—but that would be too foolish!

"On the other hand, he told himself not to be an egotistic ass. As though he could know, from a glance, that a girl was ready to fall into his arms! What masculine self-conceit! Here were two new and agreeable friends who would be glad to see him. Did he really think he had to stay away lest he get mixed up in a situation like *that?* Nonsense! . . . and so saying, he went one evening.

"They hailed him eagerly, and with such a poignancy of relief in their welcome that he knew he had guessed right—Paul had doubtless been telling Kitty that he had forgotten them, that they had meant nothing whatever to him. By coming

back, he had proved what they wanted to believe —that he was really their friend.

"Again there was a long evening of talk about everything in the world; and again—a July thunderstorm coming up—he was invited to spend the night there, and did. And again, in pajamas and nightgown, sitting on his bed, his earnest host and adorable hostess talked of love and freedom. . . . That barb *had* rankled! Paul was apparently anxious that Kitty should make use of her freedom, to prove that she really believed in him; and Kitty was rather worried. Terence laughed at them. 'Kitty,' he said, 'you are an old-fashioned wife, and wish to please your husband. That is why you believe in his silly old theories. And Paul is an old-fashioned husband, with perhaps a bad conscience over a trivial and ridiculous little sin that he can't forget—that's why he'd like you to put him in countenance. Well, why don't you please him—at least to the extent of confessing an imaginary sin! Then everything will be all right! Or—bob your beautiful hair: that sacrifice of a useless and traditional feminine adornment to a modern theory would satisfy him perhaps even better. You must find some way to be modern, Kitty!' Reassured by his raillery, she smiled, and Paul argued earnestly, and they all went to sleep dreadfully late.

"Terence stayed next morning to help Kitty

with the breakfast dishes, and then they talked, and it was nearly noon. 'Come,' she said, 'and have lunch with Paul and me—he'll be pleased,' she said.

"After lunch, Terence and Kitty went for a bus-ride, and a walk in Central Park. . . . Do you see why this story can't be written; or, being written, would seem a piece of botchwork? Simply because it has too much of life's chaotic reality in it. No, the way to write this story is to leave off what came before and followed after. Display these two, walking in Central Park, looking at each other in delight, caressing each other with shy glances. Everybody would understand that picture of two lovers who do not yet know that they are lovers. It would be pleasant and exciting to look forward to the moment of their mutual discovery. And, thus isolated from the irrelevant chaos of life, this moment of theirs would seem beautiful. To whom could it seem beautiful, as it is? Only to themselves—yes, for it does seem beautiful to them. They have forgotten the past; they are unaware of the future; they are isolated within a magic circle. They do not know of what an utterly meaningless folly this beautiful moment is a part: and so they are free, as we are not, to delight in its loveliness.

"It was late in the afternoon; Terence took Kitty home. No, he could not stay for dinner;

he remembered, or invented, another engagement; but he would wait a few minutes, till Paul came home.

"Paul did not come, and did not come. They stood in the window, looking down at the street. By accident their hands touched; and then they were in each other's arms. They kissed passionately. And then they sat down on the couch, saying to each other how glad they were. No, nothing could keep them from being glad. Love has its own childlike innocence. And they were sitting there side by side, with clasped hands, when the bell rang. They were sitting there, with clasped hands, when the door opened, and Paul came in. 'I've been telling Kitty,' said Terence, to Paul, 'that I love her.'

"Paul smiled pleasantly, as at a witticism, and said, 'She *is* nice, isn't she?' And then Terence bade them good-by, and hurried away to his dinner engagement.

"He knew, presently, that he had been a fool; but he didn't care. Sometimes it is good to be a fool. He was quite happy for some hours, until his mind, revolving curiously, made it clear to him why he was happy. He was happy because he had managed, for an hour, to banish those old memories. That was all. Medicine for a sick soul!

"It wouldn't be fair to go back. Kitty would

have told Paul; and Paul, the young madman—No, he couldn't go back and walk into a situation like that! He stayed away a week, two weeks. . . . But it wasn't fair to Kitty to drop the thing like this. Absurd and impossible as it was, it had been real to them both. Not to go back would be a disloyalty to her. He had to go back, if only for the sake of her girl's pride. And he needn't be afraid. No, surely he had sense enough to keep out of trouble. He would go back, and straighten out this tangle with some frank talk. . . .

"He went. Kitty was alone, Paul having gone out for cigarettes. She was surprised, distant, hurt, and glad. 'What's the matter?' he asked; and she told him. It appeared that they had talked of nothing else during those two weeks. Paul had thought Terence's speech a mere polite pleasantry, until Kitty had explained. Then he had solemnly reminded her of her freedom, and awaited Terence's return. Kitty laughed in telling it, and then grew mournful. 'I was rather glad you *didn't* come back,' she said, 'because I didn't want you to be embarrassed! But then Paul began to say that your not coming back showed that you hadn't meant anything at all! You were only playing with me, he said. That hurt my feelings. I didn't want to think that. It seemed real. I didn't want to think that I had

been just a—a little fool! But he argued and argued. At last I told him that if you *never* came back to see me at all, I'd admit that he was right. But never was too long, he said, so I agreed to give you just three more days. And you didn't come, you see. . . . But now you *have* come—and he *wasn't* right, after all! It did mean something to you, didn't it?' And Paul said, 'Yes, of course it did!' 'I knew it,' said Kitty. 'Paul isn't always right! But—but just because it's true, that doesn't mean that we have to—to do anything more than we've done, *does* it? Paul thinks if we love each other, then we ought to; and if we don't, then it's cowardice, or disbelief in him, or else—or else it isn't love! Can't people love each other and be—just good friends?' 'Of course they can,' Terence said, 'and we'll show him, won't we, Kitty!'

"Then Paul came in, the young madman, and the argument began again. It was the same argument; but this time it wasn't abstract or general, it was definite and particular. Paul was proving that if Kitty and Terence loved each other, they would inevitably become lovers; they might as well face the fact, he said, and accept the consequences of their love frankly and freely, instead of feeling obliged to be hypocrites. He was calm, poised, Olympian. And Terence was furious and incoherent. Again, and as brutally as

possible, not in vague terms this time, but in harsh, crude pictures, he told Paul how he would feel if they became lovers. Paul was calmly unconvinced. . . . No, the story can't be written in mere words; it might be set to music, not to sentimental opera-music, but, like a queer play I have seen, to jazz-music. That might help to convey the chaotic madness of life that is in what follows. Yes, they were all mad, drunk with youth and emotion and logic. Conceive the argument going on endlessly, late into the night, the young Olympian calmly offering his wife to his friend's arms, and the friend in tormented fury refusing her. 'But you two must want to express your love physically,' the calm young Olympian would say. 'Yes, by God, we do—but we aren't going to just to please your crazy vanity!' the other would shout. And the girl, pale and quiet, bringing out sheets to make up the couch as usual for their guest. 'Perhaps you think,' said the calm Olympian, 'that it would be in better taste to steal her from me in secret—the conventional, lying, hypocritical way of the world.' 'Yes,' said Terence, 'if it came to that! But, as it happens, and in spite of you, Kitty and I are going to be friends!' The calm Olympian smiled. He knew better.

"The argument became transferred to the bedroom, whither Terence was called to adjudicate a point in discussion between husband and wife.

A little jazz now would help. A cynical bray of the saxophone, and furious work with the drums, and, in between, some sweet, piercing, unearthly notes of a flute. Kitty failed to follow her husband's precise logic, and he rebuked her. She burst into hysterical tears, and fled from the room in her nightgown, crying wildly. The calm Olympian turned to Terence and said apologetically, 'I'm sorry Kitty can't keep her head in a discussion.' 'You fool!' Terence shouted, and went to look for Kitty.

"He found her in the toilet, sitting there and sobbing like a child. He put his arm about her, petted and comforted her, and brought her back. 'Are you over your outbreak?' asked the calm Olympian. Terence turned on him in rage. 'Your heart has never been broken, has it? Well, by God, it ought to be! A heart is not much good until it's been broken into very little pieces!' 'A heart!' cried Kitty; 'he hasn't got a heart. He's got a set of books! They're the best books —Nietzsche and Stirner and Bernard Shaw—but it's a library, not a heart. Oh, if you knew how many times he and I have lain in this bed, and me crying, and it needed just a touch from him to tell me that he loved me, and he wouldn't reach his hand across that little space between us. No, he lay there reading his five pages of Nietzsche, and then turned out the light and went

to sleep. He doesn't care! He doesn't understand—he isn't human, he's a god! What does he know about poor, suffering human beings?'

"More jazz now, while out tumbles the tormented story of her marriage to a man who isn't human, to a cruel and logical god, whom she loves but who has never loved her. 'How absurd,' said the young Olympian quietly. 'Oh, yes, you say it's absurd—but I've *never* really believed that you loved me. How can I believe it? You've proved it to me in arguments many a time. But you don't know what love is, or you couldn't talk the way you do! I believe you would go on reading your five pages of Nietzsche if you *knew* I was in another man's arms!' 'Yes, I should,' said the calm Olympian. A loud blare of the trumpets here, and the drum, like a tom-tom, keeping monotonous time to the beating of sick hearts. More arguments, more arguments. . . .

"Terence went to his couch. And presently Kitty strayed in, smiled wearily, and sat down on the edge of the couch. They talked quietly—of things far away from this insanity; hand in hand they wandered in the green fields of beauty. She shivered in the cool breeze from the open window, and he drew aside the coverlet to let her in beside him. They put their arms about each other, and the world faded about them.

"Terence was the first to remember time, place,

and circumstance. He looked at Kitty, in the cool moonlight. She was forgetfully at peace. She murmured drowsy words. He didn't want to spoil this little moment for her. But he was thinking of the boy in the next room. 'What about Paul?' he said at last. She opened her eyes. 'Oh, he's read his five pages of Nietzsche and gone to sleep long ago.' 'You don't really believe that, Kitty?' 'Yes, of course.' 'I—don't.' 'Why—what do you think?' 'I think we'd better go in the other room and see what's happening.'

"They went in. There was a dim shape huddled in a corner of the bed. Terence jerked on the light. Paul lay there, twisted into a strange shape, like a tortured animal, agonized with pain, yet unable to make a sound. Kitty stared at him with wide, astonished eyes, utterly incredulous for a moment. Then she cried, 'But—you *do* care! You do love me!' and she flung herself upon him, drawing him fiercely into her arms.

"He made a feeble gesture as if to push her away. Helpless within her arms he fought for strength to speak, fought visibly as a dying man might fight for such strength, found it at last, and whispered, coldly and austerely and distantly, 'Go—away.'

"She laughed, and hugged him tight in her arms. 'No—I'll never go away!'

"His strength came back little by little. 'I'll

—go,' he said. 'Ah!' she cried, 'do you think, now I've found my lover, I will ever let him go?' She held him, as though he were a child.

"He began to talk. His talk, with pauses while he got his breath, and shot through with spasms of pain, was still clear, calm, logical. He was, though in torment, still Olympian. Like Prometheus nailed to the icy crag and with vultures tearing at his bowels, he discoursed. He had learned something, and he was telling it. 'I've learned,' he said, in a voice hardly louder than a whisper, 'that life is more—like a Broadway melodrama—than I thought. . . . And I know, now, what Kitty was—talking about when she spoke—of her heart. A heart—is something that hurts. I've never been—hurt before. . . . I didn't know that—anybody could hurt so much and—live. . . . I suppose it's—jealousy. I didn't know it was like—this. I thought jealousy was an idea. It isn't. It's—a pain. . . . But—there's one thing where I don't—feel as they do in—Broadway melodrama. I don't want to—kill anybody. I just want to—die.' 'Oh,' said Kitty, rocking him in her arms, 'do you suppose I'd let you die—*now!*' 'I'll tell you why,' he went on; 'it's because I see how—life is arranged. It's a—struggle. And I—I'm afraid. That's all. I know, now, I've always been afraid. I've been afraid of losing Kitty's love. So I pretended to myself that

I—didn't care. Now I know. I've wanted Kitty's love more than anything else on earth. It's been the only beautiful thing that ever—happened to me. I've starved, I've been—kicked about. Kitty—Kitty's love—has been the only thing that made it worth while to—go on living. And—just because it meant so much to me, I had to think that it—didn't matter. That—was how I kept from—being afraid. Now I know. I haven't got Kitty's love—' 'Oh, yes, you have!' she laughed; 'do you suppose I care for anything or anybody else?' 'No,' he went on, 'I haven't really got it. It isn't—really mine. I don't mean—you, Terence. I mean—the way life is. I'd have to—fight for her love. I'd have to deserve it. I don't want to fight for it. I don't want to have to deserve it. I want it to be mine. Do you understand? And that isn't—the way life is arranged. One must fight. But I can't fight for what I—want. I'd rather—die.' 'But you *have* me, darling,' she crooned; 'I was yours from the beginning of the world—I'm going to be yours for ever and ever. . . .'

"Terence kept wondering what hidden motive of cruelty in himself had caused him to forget. Kitty wasn't to blame. She really believed that he wouldn't care! But Terence had known better. . . . Forgetting wasn't a sufficient excuse. He must have wanted to forget. Was it

that he desired Kitty so much?—or that he hated Paul! And why should he, unknown to himself, hate this boy so much as to want to inflict this inconceivable and hideous cruelty upon him? Was it because Paul was himself, his younger self, his dead self? Was it because he loved Paul, as one can only love oneself, that he had dared punish him so? He stood aghast at the dark possibilities he glimpsed dimly within his nature. . . .

"Far, far too good to be true—this apparent outcome! For Kitty's fierce tenderness was melting the ice in Paul's soul, bringing him back to life. His tortured limbs had relaxed, he lay there in her arms, quietly. Terence said, 'I'm ashamed of myself,' and turned to go from the room. But Paul raised himself up and said earnestly, 'You needn't be. How could I ever have known that I needed Kitty's love, but for this? You've made me understand.' Terence laughed, a little grimly. 'I suppose,' he said, 'that you think I did it on purpose, for the sake of your education.' 'Yes,' said Paul, 'I really think you did, whether you realize it or not. Anyway, you've given us back our love, and I'm grateful to you.' Again the saxophone, here, for chorus, and the kettledrums, and the laughter of the clarinet! Now that Paul had ceased to be a god to himself, he had made a god of this intruder; Kitty seemed to agree with him; and be-

fore Terence slipped back shamefacedly to his couch, it had been proved, logically and indisputably, that his wise and kind and far-seeing intervention had restored to health a marriage that was in peril!

"No, the story doesn't stop here. It would seem, then, to have some meaning, though a preposterous one; and that meaning would be a lie. For we are dealing with life, now, which is chaos. Find a meaning here if you can! For that morning Terence awoke to the patter of bare feet, Kitty going through his room to the bathroom; her head was averted, but there was despair and weariness in her whole body's gesture. He watched for her to come back. She saw him awake, came over to his bedside with drooping shoulders, and whispered in a tragic voice: 'Why, he's only a child!'—and turned and went slowly back into the bedroom. She had liked her god-husband, after all. And he was lost to her.

"The story doesn't exactly end. It trails off, by degrees of anticlimax, to commonplace, as things do in real life. But let it stop here—the story of Paul and Kitty.

"While as for that other story in the background—I might tell you how Terence and that girl whom he couldn't quite forget presently made up their quarrel, and swore to be faithful to each other till death. . . . That would be a

good frame for the picture—an ironic frame, always excellent as a literary device. Then the tale might be entitled 'In the Interval,' or something like that. . . . But—that, too, would be a lie, a pretty lie. For that wasn't the end—Terence and that girl quarreled again, and gave each other up at last, as they had been trying so long to do. . . .

"No, there is no meaning in it! It's merely—what happened. And that is why we prefer the pretty patterns of fiction, my friend. Life's chaos is the dark mine in which we find the metal of art. We refine it and shape it to our purpose. Don't you see, there are a dozen different fiction-stories in the volcanic jumble of fact I have told you! Indeed, I've written a dozen stories out of it already; you wouldn't recognize them, they're so neat, so shapely, so clear in their outlines, so full of sweetness and beauty and what we feel to be Truth—meaning a lie we can believe! That's why I present you with this, still left after I've drawn my dozen pretty stories from it—crude, dirty, brutal, real, a piece of slag!"

VII. The Ex-Villager's Confession

Not only that I love you—that in you
I find old dreams incredibly come true,
And you in every dream, world without end,
Goddess and girl-child, lover and guest and friend!
Not only that I love you—seeking still
To bend and break the guarding of your will,
And find, behind that stubbornness, the splendor
Of body and soul in triumph of surrender!—
But that, deep under deep, in you I find
Something to my caresses deaf and blind:
Something not mine to take, nor yours to give,
But only by whose light our love may live.
Lovelier in you than all your laughing youth
Is that which holds love lightly beside truth.

The Ex-Villager's Confession

YES (he said), you wouldn't think it to see me now, a sedate householder living here in the country with my family, and all that—but I was a Greenwich Villager once, myself! Yes, indeed, my boy, free love is no new idea to me, and if you thought you were going to shock me with the news about you and Jane, you're mistaken. . . . Well, yes, I'd just as soon tell you about it. Only—you mustn't expect me to be excessively romantic about it. I'll tell you the truth as near as I can, and you can think what you like about it.

I'll begin at the beginning, with the time when Rosemary—I'll call her Rosemary—the time when she and I first met each other. We were both terribly poor, and very ambitious, and very modern. She was from the Middle West, and so was I, and we had just come to Greenwich Village, hoping for fame and sure at least of freedom. Rosemary wanted to go on the stage; and meanwhile, she worked at some poorly paid secretarial job. I wrote book-reviews for a pittance,

and dreamed of writing a novel. We met each other at the Liberal Club, and became good friends.

We were very fond of talk. We had talked over everything in the wide world. We had neglected food and sleep, in the passionate enthusiasm of discussion. We held the same views of literature and art, we agreed in hating capitalism and war. And, incidentally, of course, we agreed in disbelieving in marriage. We considered it a stupid relic of the barbaric past, a ridiculous and tyrannical convention. We were altogether enchanted with each other's enlightened opinions.

One evening, as Rosemary and I talked, there came in the midst of our intellectual discussion, a pause—a moment in which we gazed at each other in one of those silences that can end only in a kiss. And a moment later we knew—what anybody else, no doubt, could have told us all along—that we were in love.

Love seems to make people illogical. For a moment I almost forgot my intellectual theories, under the stress of a very old-fashioned emotion. I wanted to swear eternal fidelity to her. I wanted us to belong to each other until death. I'm afraid I'd have found nothing unreasonable at that moment in the idea of registering such an oath publicly, with appropriate barbaric ceremonial. In short, it seems to me as I look back

upon that moment, that what I really wanted was to marry the girl I loved.

But—we were terribly poor, and utterly uncertain of our future. I remember fiercely hating my poverty just then, as though it were an obstacle to my happiness. And then next moment I was ashamed of that thought, as though it were a kind of treachery to Rosemary. I was ashamed of myself for thinking that my poverty would make any difference to her. Poverty might be an obstacle to marriage—but Rosemary and I didn't believe in marriage. I felt that Rosemary would despise me if she knew I had been thinking in terms of that decadent property-institution. So I didn't say anything to her about getting married. But I did say, laughingly:

"Rosemary, I feel that I am on the verge of promising—oh, all sorts of absurd and impossible things!"

"Don't," said Rosemary. "It's dear of you to want to—but you must not promise anything. I might be foolish enough to believe you. And besides—we have something better to do with our lives than trying to keep absurd promises. We have our—our work. That is why we came here. Chance has thrown us together. But our destinies may carry us apart, who knows when? We mustn't try to settle our whole futures with reference to the fact that we are in love with each

other now! All we have a right to do is to make the most of this moment of happiness while it lasts."

Bravely spoken, wasn't it?

But the occasion seemed to demand a pledge of some kind. And so, instead of promising, in the old-fashioned way, to be true to each other, we promised, in a more modern fashion, that each would be true to himself. "And," said Rosemary, "when the time comes, and . . . one of us falls in love with somebody else, we won't lie about it. We will tell each other, and part. Freely, and without regrets or recriminations!"

These were our vows—to be courageously candid in our expected and inevitable unfaithfulness. For we knew, intellectually, that the time would come when we would no longer love each other. Instinctively, we could not believe it—to speak of such a thing at a time like this was secretly a hurt to our deepest feelings. But we believed in facing the facts. We were reasonable, intellectual, modern young people. And—there is no doubt about it—we felt superior to the common run of mankind.

Our standards of behavior were, as a matter of fact, set terribly high. The laws of the land, we knew, permitted within marriage a degree of selfishness, of brutality, of cruelty even, which we as civilized lovers would never for a moment

tolerate. We were going to behave *better* than any husband and wife!

But it wasn't that we wanted to set a shining example to the world. We only wanted to be let alone to be happy in our love—while it lasted.

It was true that our relationship would be condemned by nasty-minded people. . . . However, we knew scarcely any nasty-minded people. Our friends were all modern young people like ourselves, many of whom, secretly or openly, had dispensed with ceremony in their love-arrangements. And we had no anxious relatives to come snooping around, asking to see our wedding certificate. Moreover, being poor, we were obscure; no one in New York would care how we lived; the reporters would not camp on our doorstep asking for interviews on "free love." It was not necessary for us to pose on the one hand as martyrs to an ideal, nor on the other to skulk about in secret rendezvous under the disguise of false names and a wedding ring. We need neither argue about our conduct, nor lie about it. We could be lovers openly and fearlessly. . . . Nevertheless, we both felt very adventurous and a little frightened when we went out to look for a place to live.

In Greenwich Village there were wonderful old houses, where one could rent a whole floor for almost nothing. We found a place that charmed

us, with its great high-ceiled rooms, deep-embrasured windows, and fireplaces, not far from Washington Square. Rosemary and I looked at each other in awe and delight, and whispered, "Let's take it." We paid the rent, and moved in a taxicab; and while Rosemary sat sewing on the gay-colored chintz curtains we had bought, I went down and put our cards over the letter-box in the hall.

We had seen, in the hallways of our Greenwich Village friends, little placards that usually read, non-committally:

BROWN-NELSON
Two Flights Up.

But sometimes there were to be seen, tacked one above the other, two old visiting-cards—relics of their owners' former conventional lives in Oregon and Georgia, perhaps—now proclaiming boldly that the apartment was occupied together by

MISS PHYLLIS WOOD
MR. GEORGE HENDERSON

I had consulted Rosemary about it, and she had said: "We'll put both our names up, of course!"—and I blushed to think that I had for a moment entertained a more cowardly idea. . . . That was

our only overt defiance to the great outside world; and the great outside world, as represented by the postman, did not seem to mind in the least.

Yes, the great outside world went on its way, leaving us to conduct our sociological experiment in peace. As for our small world, the Village, it approved, of course. Cards like that were going up every few days in the hallways about Washington Square. . . . An observant stranger might have said that we had our conventions, and that this was one of them.

Rosemary and I were very happy: and I must say that according to any sensible standards, we were a most respectable young couple. Seen against the background of a moderately frivolous suburban group of the post-war period, we should have been immediately set down as prudes. We were busy with our work and our ambitions, and enchanted with each other. And so it went. . . .

To be sure, there were minor difficulties. You see, young people of talent can't in the course of time avoid gaining a wider recognition, which carries with it a more extended acquaintance. And our mode of living, so comfortably attuned to a small world of unknown and struggling idealists, began to present some embarrassments as we became in spite of ourselves entangled in the fringes of that bourgeois world which we despised. There was the matter of casual invita-

tions from new acquaintances, for example. "Won't you come to dinner next Monday? And"—uncertainty cloaking itself in genial vulgarity—"*is* there a Mrs.?" Of course, such invitations could always be declined without regret. But the existence in our world of people to whom a situation could not possibly be explained, accustomed us to see the situation through their stupid eyes. If this pretty girl with whom I was said to be living was not my "Mrs.," then she must be my "mistress." The idea that any one could think so infuriated me. Rosemary was not the sort of girl who is anybody's "mistress": nor did I, for that matter, like to be thought of as the kind of man who "keeps a mistress." The conception was hateful and degrading. But what could we do about it? We were not going to lie to please them, much less get married for their convenience. . . . After all, we despised such people, and what they thought did not matter to us.

But time went on, and "chance" did not part us. It was a less noble accident that intervened.

We had become—we didn't quite know why—estranged. Every one expects that to happen every once in a while to husbands and wives. They can afford to indulge in the painful luxury of such moods. But it was the first time it had ever happened to us, and it seemed a portent.

Estrangement left us helpless. A good quarrel might have cleared things up, by letting us know what the trouble was. But we had been consistently and stringently on our best behavior with each other all this while; we had never quarreled—we were too civilized to quarrel. And now, wondering miserably what it was all about, and how it had started, we only became more polite, more considerate—and more lonely. And at length, as might cynically have been expected, one of us found a consoling bosom on which to forget the secret pain of that estrangement; and I was that one. There was in that, so far as our declared beliefs were concerned, nothing for me to be ashamed of, or for Rosemary to be angry about. Such things, we knew, happened. Only it was not, according to those beliefs, a matter that could honorably be concealed from Rosemary.

I was false to my beliefs. I lied, like any cowardly sneak of a respectable married man who has been unfaithful to his wife. And I addressed to myself the same arguments. I said to myself that Rosemary would take it "too seriously." I said that the telling of my secret would irretrievably ruin the possibility of further happiness with Rosemary. I said all the usual things to myself, and acted accordingly.

But I am a poor liar; I could not keep it up

very long. I broke down, and told Rosemary. Even if it meant the end of everything, I *couldn't* go on lying to her.

To Rosemary it did mean the end of everything. Not, she insisted, because of my unfaithfulness, but because I had lied about it. She said—bitterly—that I had treated her as though she were a wife.

I couldn't find any words with which to defend myself. After all, it wasn't anybody else's morality that I had offended against: it was mine—and Rosemary's. We had thrown traditional morality overboard at the outset of our adventure. We had chosen to dispense with everything except our trust in each other; and I had violated that. And so, when she declared sadly that this ended things between us, I had nothing to reply.

The time was here which we had so cheerfully discussed in the first moments of our love—the time to part, "freely and without regrets or recriminations." Somewhat of that pledge—the heroic abstention from vain regrets—seemed to be beyond our powers; we were only human, after all. But at least there were no ugly recriminations; we were courteous to each other to the last. We told each other how happy we had been. . . .

The end had come. We had made our own laws, and we had to abide by them. Rather more like frightened and lonely children than like free

adventurers, we kissed each other, and said good-by.

We must go on, now, to such other beautiful and fleeting moments as chance might give us. . . .

But I don't think I shall tell you about those other "beautiful and fleeting moments." Some of them weren't very beautiful.

It was several years later when Rosemary and I talked together again about love.

"The trouble with us," said Rosemary frankly, "was that we were fools. Nice fools—but still, fools!"

"Were we?" I said.

"It's no use to reason the way we did about love," she insisted. "It's not an entirely reasonable thing, love isn't."

"How have you found that out?" I asked.

"By daring to let myself fall really in love for once!" she answered. "And I assure you that it is *not* a civilized and modern relationship!"

"You are going to be married?" I asked.

"Of course—and have babies."

"I—I didn't know you wanted babies," I said naïvely.

"Neither did I," she said. "I didn't dare to let myself when—when I was in love with you. That was the trouble—we promised to tell the truth to each other, but we didn't know what the truth

was. It was all a beautiful lie, that part of it. People *aren't* so civilized as we pretended to be; they're barbarians, really. We want the old things—the best of them; things like homes, and permanence, and babies. At least I'm like that—and I'm glad I've found it out. Do you remember how we used to assure each other that marriage was a relic of barbarism? Well, so are our feelings—relics of barbarism. And it's our feelings that we love with—not our brains!"

"I'm afraid, Rosemary," I said, smiling at her, "that you've become a reactionary!"

"I don't care!" she said defiantly.

"And are you sorry, now—"

"About us? No, I'm not. I had to learn. And that was the only way I could. I wouldn't have believed it if I'd read it in a book. It was a part of my education. And—and it's all right for people to be hurt, if they learn something by it. There's nothing to be sorry for."

"I should have known you wouldn't regret it," I said.

"But you—" she said. "Have you learned anything from it? I expect not. But let me give you this tip. The next modern girl you fall in love with—don't take her at her word. Don't let her fool you. Don't let her fool herself. And see how it works out."

Well, you can see for yourself—if you look

out the window—how it's worked out. But I can tell you that if you had seen that girl a few years ago when she first landed in Greenwich Village, you would never have thought you'd find her here in a garden with her baby, picking flowers. She hadn't come to Greenwich Village for anything as tame as marriage and babies. She laughed at the idea of marriage. She was a rip-snorting modern young woman. She was—I'll tell you what she was like: she was like your Jane, hell-bent for adventure and the free life! And yet—I don't believe she's regretted being cheated out of it. She seems happy. She *looks* happy. It may be, of course, that she is secretly embittered because she didn't get a chance to have her fling in Greenwich Village; but I doubt it.

Well, give my love to Jane, and tell her that the old codger said, "Bless you, my children!"

VIII. Green Houses

(*With acknowledgments to Heroichiro Myderco*)

I dreamed of us as eagles in the air,
Adventurers through lightning-riven space,
Children of danger—for you seemed to wear
Her careless colors in your laughing face;
I thought of us met high above the press
Of common hopes and fears, too swiftly daring
To forfeit our own storm-bright happiness,
And what our doom might be, too little caring!

Will nothing less content me? No, not me—
Who too familiar am with wind and star
To have much patience with mortality.
Will you put off this human guise, unbar
Your strong-winged spirit to the realms of sky?
You will not, Sweet? Forgive me—and good-by.

Green Houses

WE were trying to explain Greenwich Village to our Japanese friend. We said that it represented the revolt of modern youth against tribal custom. And of us all, Fan was the most eloquent, remembering her twenty-odd years of imprisonment in the quaint respectability of a Southern town. The war, which had upset so many things throughout the world, had extended its disturbing influences even into the town of Shiloh, sufficiently to permit this daughter of an old family to come to New York and try to earn a living. In that respect her adventure had not been so far a great success. She had found and lost one tiny job after another, but she had stuck it out for nearly a year, with the assistance of some kind of allowance from her family. But there were compensations; once in New York, she had flown like a bird to Greenwich Village and found herself a lover. Carlo was one of our most talented young artists, and a charming fellow. It was in the studio which they jointly occupied that we were having this discussion. Carlo's canvases—he had done a great deal of very good work during this last

year—were stacked against the walls; and there were dozens of gayly covered pillows strewn all over the floor, upon which we now lounged in conversation, sipping our iced drinks. Fan had chosen for their studio-home a location on a back street of which the name was not yet associated in the provinces with Greenwich Village—so that her address would not cause alarm back at home. For Greenwich Village and its lawless freedoms had been all too well advertised throughout the nation by shocked moralists; Fan herself, immersed in Shiloh, had received her most definite information about it from a sermon by the Episcopal rector, who related as a sign of these decadent and godless times the fact that in Greenwich Village young people kept house together without being married, and—worse, if that were possible—separated without asking anybody's permission! "And then and there," Fan told us in her soft Southern voice, "I resolved to come to Greenwich Village." In the whole history of the town, she said, there had been but one divorce; and people were still talking about it, though it had happened ten years ago. Nobody, meanwhile, talked of the misery, the cruelty, the wretchedness of marriages like her father's and mother's. Such things were taken for granted! No wonder, then, that this beautiful, idle girl, bred up for marriage, had managed to reach the age of twenty

still unwed; and no wonder that, without any intellectual background, she had nevertheless idealized the scandalous freedom of Greenwich Village in the matter of matings and partings. We veteran Villagers had come to take this kind of freedom rather casually. But to Fan, a beautiful tame bird escaped from her cage to nest with us wild ones, this freedom was the final meaning of the Village. And so it was she, rather than any of us, who discoursed eloquently to our Japanese friend upon that aspect of our Village life.

Our Japanese friend, who was a poet at home and here a student of social conditions, listened courteously to all we said, and then remarked gravely:

"Yes, your American *Green Village* reminds me of our Japanese Green Houses."

We were rather shocked at such a comparison; we were disappointed in the perspicacity of our Japanese friend. Indeed, we were too embarrassed at the insult to say anything. But Fan, when the reference to "Green Houses" had been quietly explained to her by Carlo, turned upon the offender such a look of indignation that he felt himself in the wrong and began hastily to apologize and explain.

"No doubt it was absurd for me to think that," he said. "I had forgotten for the moment that you here in Greenwich Village are revolution-

ists—you feel confident of your power to overthrow the old conventions based on property. But we in Japan are more humble. We see that property considerations have ruled human lives for a long time, and we fear that it is destined to remain so. And what place, in a social system based on property rights, is there for the vagrant and incalculable impulses of love? Little or none, it seems. There is a place for loyalty, for honor, for domestic affection—but scarcely for love. That would be too upsetting. And so it is banished from respectable society, to find its refuge outside—in the Green Houses. Let me remind you that the true *oiran* has been with us a representative of the charms of art and intellect; and it is she, naturally, who stands for individual choice in love. Without her, we should have had no love stories, no love poems. Our great legendary tales of heroic and faithful and tragic love are woven about some celebrated *oiran* and her emperor or poet lover. Our great popular art of color-print design arose as a means of celebrating her beauty and her charm. She, in her little Green Town, like you free artists in your Village, was an inspiration to a populace confined in a routine too dutiful, too orderly, too dull—a reminder of the existence of beauty and freedom: that was all I meant by my comparison. I am very sorry to have offended you. Doubtless it

seemed to have other objectionable implications which were far from my thoughts. It was a stupid thing for me to say."

We were all placated except Fan, who flung at him the Village's worst word of rebuke: "It was a very *bourgeois* thing to say about us!"

"I did not mean it so," he said, and smiled at her. "May I make amends by telling you a story which has come into my head?"

"Please do!" we all urged him. We knew his stories—incredibly romantic, too beautiful to be true, woven like a delicate and fragile pattern in silk threads of many and shining colors.

"A moment of freedom—or so we believe in Japan—is better than none. You here in your Village, planning freedom for the whole world, may despise so slight a thing as a moment's freedom—no doubt you have the right. But I shall tell you a tale of a respectable young man in Japan, and his brief moment of freedom."

We lighted new cigarettes and settled back on Fan's pillows to listen. And thus he began:

"Spring Flower opened her eyes, awakened by the patter of house-clogs along the little porch outside her room. Then she saw Osomé, her little twelve-year-old attendant, peeping in from behind the screen which stood before the door. 'Is it time to get up?' Spring Flower asked sleepily.

"'Yes, beautiful mistress,' answered Osomé.

"And just then the bells of Uyeno temple began to chime the noon-hour. Osomé entered, carrying between her hands a great polished brass bowl filled with water. Still holding it, she knelt beside the quilted bed. 'Another day!' said Spring Flower, lifting her head from the lacquered pillow. Leaning on a pink elbow, she smiled across the bowl at Osomé. 'Another day,' she repeated idly. 'What will it bring?'

"In the bowl there floated a single delicate white blossom. *'Mah!'* cried Spring Flower, bending over it to smell the fragrance. 'That is a good omen!'

"At this moment, as it happened, a handsome youth was stepping into a jinrikisha in front of the Tokio-*ya,* the Tokio Hotel. 'Where, honorable master?' asked the 'rikisha-man, turning in the shafts.

"The young man hesitated, and then said, in as lordly a way as possible, 'I wish to see the city.'

"*'Hai!'* said the 'rikisha-man. 'The gardens, the temples, dinner in Uyeno, a theater, and then the Green Houses!'

"'Exactly!' said the young man.

"'I understand perfectly!' said the 'rikisha-man. 'The honorable young master may depend upon me.' He made a clicking noise with his tongue and started off.

"Isamu—for that was the young man's name—sat in the jinrikisha stiffly. His *haori,* with his family crest embroidered on the back and sleeves, was new, and so was his European felt hat. He pressed one hand against the folds above his sash, to reassure himself that his money was still there.

"He had arrived in Tokio the night before, and early this morning he had hastened to get through the preliminaries of the business which had brought him here. He had gone straight to the silk-house of Sato, in Silver-Seat Street, an enormous tiled house with closed shutters. A great awning paraded the sign *'Sa'*—the first syllable of the great silk-merchant Sato; the walls were a dingy checkered black-and-white, and an ancient willow stood in front. He had felt very young as he entered the deep shadowy doorway and let the boy remove his sandals. A man at a table in the further corner was calculating on an abacus; that was Sato's head-clerk. He now came forward, and they exchanged bows, while the boy spread a cloak for them to sit on. Isamu announced himself, and made suitable replies concerning his father's honorable health, and then tea was served. Isamu admitted that it was his first visit to Tokio, and that he was now beginning to take an active part in his father's honorable business. Gradually the talk arrived at the subject of silk, and samples were brought in. The

master of the stock-room was sent for; and as the heavy silent doors at the back slid open, Isamu had a glimpse of clerks rushing to and fro in an atmosphere of bustle and importance. Subdued by this brief suggestion of the huge transactions of the great house of Sato, he followed the expert and deferential advice of the head-clerk and the master of the stock-room, scarcely daring to use his own judgment in the selection of two of the new stripes and an imported *sarasa*. At last it had all been finished. Now, as he rode through the streets in his jinrikisha, he thought of that gloomy building and those grave men, behind whose suavity was an icy sternness. He knew; his father was like that.

"To-morrow he would go to the silk-house and pay for the goods he had ordered; and next day he would return to the quiet town of Mito, and live in the strict precincts of his father's house, as usual. But to-day was his for pleasure!

"It was mid-April, and sunshine flooded the streets. The crowds jostled along good-humoredly. Beautifully dressed ladies, with finely penciled eyebrows and tiny carmined lips sped by in jinrikishas. In and out of shop doors they flowed in streams, their pink *u-moji* flashing about their clogs as they walked. Isamu watched them in fascination. They were different from the girls he had seen at Mito; different from

Ofumi, to whom he had been betrothed in childhood, and whom he was to marry next year. Women had always been to him remote beings, especially his fiancée; so remote as not to occupy his thoughts, except as a different race of beings. Now that difference became mysterious and impressive. His mind lingered upon them as he passed.

"Soon he had seen all of Tokio, its streets, its temples, its gardens. He had dined in the Uyeno at a Western café, daring such strange food as beefsteak, pie, and coffee. He had been to the Kabuki Theater, and seen a performance of 'The Love-Death of the Tea-House of Osaka'; he had come out deeply thrilled, and reminded of his boyhood with its romantic legends of tragic love.

" 'And now,' said the 'rikisha-man, 'the honorable young master wishes to see the famous Green Houses!'

" 'Go, then!' Isamu commanded boldly.

"The 'rikisha-man seemed filled with new energy by the command. The cart rolled swiftly through the dark streets. Isamu's heart was filled with an obscure and delicious fear. He was going into the legendary world of the *oiran*. The bay appeared before him, a silver-blue under a sky of many stars. The water lapped faintly against the rotting timbers of the dyke which cuts off the lower end of the bay. Across this dyke

the road stretched white in the starlight, lined with willow trees that sighed gently in the cool breeze. Ahead were the Green Houses.

"The old wooden gate, beaten with the weathers of a century, loomed up at the end of the road. An old willow tree dreamed beside it. The murmur of voices drifted past.

"Isamu paid off the 'rikisha-man generously, and entered the long street, filled with a laughing and curious crowd that halted in front of each tea-house for a moment and then drifted on. In the crowd were men of every sort—officers in their bright uniforms, nobles, merchants, foreigners, youths in gaudy clothes, ragged students—an irregular procession that flowed endlessly both ways through the long street in jocund promenade. The tea-houses, graceful little two-story structures with blue-tiled roofs, stood close together, with now and then a sweetmeat-shop or a restaurant among them. At each tea-house entrance hung a huge lantern, and the immediate interior blazed with light. Over the shoulders of the crowd Isamu caught glimpses, through the wide lattices which stood in place of a front wall, of the beautifully dressed *joros,* sitting quietly as the images of Buddha in the temple, with calm marble-white faces, black slender eyebrows, and little scarlet mouths that uttered no sound. They seemed beings to worship—beautiful and distant

beings, in their gorgeous gold-brocaded *uchika-ke,* which fell in rich folds to the tiny brocaded quilts on which they knelt. Their hair rose in magnificent coiffures, in which like golden rays centered a dozen jeweled pins. Behind them stood a long golden screen, with a pine tree, wave, and Fuji decoration. Fronting the open lattice they sat, in a row of four or five, in shop after shop, silent, with eyes seemingly cast down in divine scorn, unconscious of the crowd that passed and stared.

"Isamu caught fragments of talk. A flashily dressed young man was saying, 'Yohie, the rice-wine seller, spent two hundred yen last night.' One student to another: 'Yes, they say she knows The Collection of a Myriad Leaves by heart!' Keen-eyed attendants from the tea-shops mingled with the passers-by, and singling out those that were richly dressed, recounted extravagantly the charms and talents of the *joros* who sat waiting silently within.

"Of this one it was said, 'Her voice is the wonder and admiration of all Tokio!' Of that one, 'Every word that falls from her lips is a perfect poem.' Of another, 'The wittiest *oiran* of them all!' Isamu knew that these things must be true.

"One by one, as he paused in front of a particularly gorgeous group in a very splendid tea-shop, four of these divinities arose at some word

spoken within, and with slender, stately grace and infinite dignity passed across the golden screen, out of sight. There remained a single *oiran,* the most beautiful of them all, holding a little pipe that now and then she lifted delicately to her lips. As she breathed forth a faint cloud of pale blue smoke, her glance wandered over the crowd beyond the lattice. For one moment it rested on the figure of Isamu, and then looked him full in the eyes. She seemed to smile slightly, and then turned and spoke imperiously to some one within, and seemed to nod toward him. 'She must have mistaken me for some one else,' thought Isamu, his heart throbbing violently.

"But a respectful attendant came from the shop, bowed to him, and said: 'The honorable young master is desired to come within. The beautiful Spring Flower wishes him to be her guest.'

"Spring Flower! It was a good omen. She was in every way like her name. 'But,' he stammered, 'is it permitted to ask to what I owe this good fortune?'

"The attendant smiled. 'It may be that she recognizes your family crest, and would ask news of you concerning those who are known to you. Or it may be merely that you please her. The beautiful Spring Flower has many whims.'

"Isamu entered. The attendant called out a

number, and a maid came forward and took his sandals; Isamu's eyes followed her curiously: she put them in a box marked with that number—the box in which the sandals of Spring Flower's admirers were kept. He was ushered up to a room—Spring Flower's receiving room. In front of him was a wall of black sand, with sliding landscaped panels boxing it in on three sides; a floor covered with square mats, whose fringed edges made a checkered pattern. A young girl attendant held up a bright-colored *nemaki* or housegown for him to put on, and spread an embroidered quilt on the floor. When he had seated himself, a man attendant, entering softly, inquired what the young master wished to order.

" 'Whatever is customary,' said Isamu. 'Wine, then,' suggested the man. 'A keg of rice-wine? Yes. And a troupe of *geisha*-girls? Of course. And an entertainer? It is well. I understand that the young master wishes the best of everything. All shall be provided!' He bowed himself out.

"Isamu pressed his hand against a fold in his clothes; yes, his money was still there. He had not taken too literally this ambiguous invitation; he understood well enough what it was likely to cost. It remained to be seen how he could account to his father for the missing money; but did a merchant's son ever come to Tokio without

secretly hoping for some such escapade? He was still filled with elation at the thought that Spring Flower had chosen him—for whatever unknown reason. It was of such an adventure as this that he had dreamed. And come what might, he should never regret it!

"The troupe of *geisha*-girls entered. There were seven of them, delicate flower-like creatures of about fifteen years, with eyes that sparkled like drops of dew; one of them carried a *samisen*. Tripping softly, in their light garments, they filed in, stood before him, and bowed, with a motion like blossoms swaying in the wind. Then the leader spread out her arms, and the others, as though impelled by the magic of the gesture, were scattered into an irregular semi-circle. The one with the *samisen* dropped on her knees in the corner. Their lithe young bodies, moving in subtle rhythms, seemed to melt into their draperies; and these were no longer merely garments—they were the soul of motion made visible. The leader raised her hands, her white arms flashed like tall lilies from the undulant sleeves, the strings of the *samisen* sounded sharply in the silence, and the dance had begun.

"At that moment the panels slid open, and Spring Flower stood there, looking down at him with calm eyes. The panels closed behind her, and she came, stepping delicately in her clogs, to

his side, and sank on the little quilt before his own. The girl attendant carried in her fire-box, set it on the floor between them, and placed beside it a box of cigarettes. She took one, lighted it, and gave it to Isamu. 'It is like life,' she said, in a voice which made her words seem like the saying of a poem; 'pleasant while it lasts, and vanishing too soon into nothingness.'

"While she spoke, the rice-wine was set before them in slender-mouthed blue flasks. She poured a steaming cupful, and offered it to him. 'It is like love,' she said; 'once tasted, it cannot ever be refused.'

"He took the cup. 'It is my first taste,' he said. He had not taken his eyes from her since she entered. When she sat down facing him, the silken sounds of her garments made him tremble, and a perfume that was like *ume* troubled his will with its fragrance. Her mouth as she spoke was like two rose-petals unfolding. The white glimpse of her arm as she offered him the cup of wine was like the crescent moon breaking from a cloud. He wished to tell her so, but could not.

" 'Drink then,' she said, 'O happy youth!'

"He drank, and the first sip of the hot sweet wine gave him power over words. 'It was for your presence that I thirsted,' he said. 'Why did you keep me so many ages in loneliness?'

"She smiled. 'When the field is awaiting the

spring, she first puts on her robes of green; but when spring has come, she decks herself out in her most beautiful garments to meet him!' She had indeed changed into a more splendid dress.

"The music changed, and she bent her head toward the dancers. 'The sun shines on all the flowers alike,' she said. 'Let my lord graciously look upon those who are here in his honor.'

" 'When one looks too long upon the sun,' he answered, 'one does well to look at its reflection in the water!'—and he turned toward the dancers, seeing their loveliness indeed only as a reflection of that marvelous being beside him, of whom he was still afraid. While he watched, the dancers swayed in the climax of the dance and then sank gracefully to the floor.

"Spring Flower glanced at the girl attendant, who went into an inner room and returned with a *samisen*. 'I have looked into your heart through your eyes,' she said, 'and read there that you are no lover of the new songs, but would rather I sang for you one of the old ballads. Am I right, my friend?'

" 'You have read me truly,' he replied, and to his delight and astonishment she began to sing the Ballad of Shinnai, which he had always loved. Her voice in singing became different, deeper and more resonant. As the stanzas followed, one

after another, in their quiet and noble melancholy, and with their wild and heart-breaking refrain, he forgot her and was swept back into his childhood dreams.

"He was recalled suddenly, after a silence, from that far land by a noise like the barking of a tiny chow-dog. He looked at Spring Flower in surprise, for she had been transformed in a moment from a voice out of the past into a street-urchin, with comic twisted face, like those idle ragamuffins that played 'being-a-demon' in front of his father's shop. Her fingers, which had but a moment before stroked the strings with a slow processional dignity, now tickled them into a succession of little hysterical sounds, accompanying the swift, sharp, smart little words which exploded from her tongue, breaking now and then into a tiny and irresistible chow-dog yelp. It was the 'little-laugh song,' the 'giggle song,' the very newest thing in the Green Houses, the fashion of a moment. Next month it would be supplanted by another, and next year it would be utterly forgotten.

"She finished the song, and clapped her hands together, and the *geisha*-girls swayed to their feet and untangled the complicated rhythms of another dance. Bending toward him, Spring Flower said: 'You need not be ashamed of en-

joying that foolish song, my hero! The *samurai* Goto himself would have listened to it with pleasure.'

" 'You made it beautiful, as moonlight makes beautiful the roofs of a town,' he replied.

" 'The bees,' she said, 'know there is a sweet in every kind of flower. I gather the sweets of song, my lord, from the pastures of the shadow-world, and from the weeds in the gutter.'

"The entertainer arrived mid-dance, and presently began to tell stories. He was a fat little old man with a droll face; he drank enormous quantities of hot rice-wine. He started in very gravely with an episode of The Forty-seven Ronin, changed abruptly to The Boy Who Went Fishing, and went on with tales that set them all rocking with laughter; and finally proposed a game of 'flower cards.' But Spring Flower shook her head at that, and instead they played another game, with a hundred cards, each bearing on its face a poem and a portrait of the poet. These were spread out, fifty on each side, and the *geisha*-girls and Osomé the maid joined them, ranged five against five, seated before the cards. The entertainer read from a book containing the same poems, opening to a page at random; and the first word was hardly uttered when some one with eyes roving swiftly over the cards would put a quick finger on it, and place it in the little

pile on that side. Spring Flower and Isamu were on opposite sides. Isamu knew the poems well enough, but was unfamiliar with the game; at first he played badly, and then, his faculties stirred by the zest of competition, began to be one of the best among them. But Spring Flower won the game for her side; while Isamu was recognizing a card, she had put her finger on it. 'Do not consider the matter so thoughtfully, my pet,' she said laughingly; 'when the eagle sees his prey, he strikes!' The game broke up amid laughter and talk and the drinking of many cups of rice-wine.

"As the entertainer and the *geisha*-girls prepared to leave, Spring Flower sent her maid from the room; and she returned with a handful of little envelopes tied with colored cord, which Spring Flower gave to the man attendant to distribute among them. 'I am hostess to-night,' she said. 'This for the leader—this to be divided equally among the *geishas*—this for the entertainer—and this for yourself.' 'And this, too,' said Isamu, taking from his bosom a handful of ten-yen bills. His father's money! But what did that matter now? He had his reward in her smile, and in the awed silence with which they bowed their thanks for his princely munificence. The attendant whispered to him: 'Then the honorable young master will deign to remain?'

Yes, Isamu would remain. He was no longer afraid of Spring Flower. More adorable than ever, she was less remote; he had touched her hand in the card game, and breathed the perfume of her breath.

"The recipients of his bounty had bowed themselves back to the door-panels; they smiled at him and wished him good night, and their eyes seemed to flash him other merry wishes as they bowed themselves out and the door-panels closed behind them. Isamu looked over to where Spring Flower stood, beside the empty wine-flasks. Her long eyelashes lifted slowly, her eyes met his. 'The cherry trees bloomed to-day in honor of your coming,' she said, 'and to-night my heart is a bough that has put forth new blossoms.' The bells of Uyeno temple chimed midnight. Spring Flower took his hand lightly and led him into her chamber.

"The next day Isamu had his midday meal at the Tokio-*ya,* and then climbed into a jinrikisha. 'Where, honorable young master?' asked the 'rikisha-man. It was the same one. 'Anywhere,' said Isamu. The jinrikisha started up the street. He could not go to the silk-house and pay for the goods he had ordered the day before. He had found better uses for his money. He had left it all in the little lacquered cabinet where Spring Flower kept her sweetmeats. He had put it there

early in the morning while she still slept her deep, sweet sleep; she would find it when she awakened, and remember him. He had kept only a bill that would pay for his stay at the hotel, and his journey back home. That was as it should be; anything less than all he had would have been too little to give. But how was he to face his father? . . . It was no use to think of that. And so he thought, instead, of Spring Flower.

"He wished he could send her some message. And then a thought came to him, and he bought at a jeweler's shop a long gold hair-pin set with a red stone, and sent it to her with a little poem saying: *'The pine tree remembers the lightning.'*

"He had left now only a handful of silver in his sleeve; but it was enough to pay for a jinrikisha, and that evening he resolved to look upon her face again. The jinrikisha sped swiftly through the dark streets, the bay loomed up ahead, the white road stretched on beneath the stars, the old, old willow tree by the gate bent down its slender fingers caressingly—crowds—the tea-house of Wakamatsu—and there behind the lattice, Spring Flower! She saw him, and smiled, and a moment later the attendant humbly besought his honorable entrance. It was no use to explain to the man, and so he went inside.

"Without any delay, she came to him in her receiving room, wearing his golden pin in her

high coiffure. 'I have been waiting for you, my lord,' she said.

" 'I have no right to be here,' he told her simply. 'I am a beggar. I only came to look upon your face once more.'

"She smiled. 'If you are a beggar, then it is fitting that I should befriend you,' she said. 'Men have given me rich gifts; but no man before has given me all he had. Now it is my turn to give. Be seated, my lord.'

"She clapped her hands, and bade Osomé bring rice-wine. 'I think,' she said, 'that we would rather be alone to-night. But I shall sing to you, if you wish. Osomé, my *samisen!*'

"While she waited for the *samisen,* she said to him: 'I sat in the garden to-day, catching the cherry-petals that fell from the tree, and thinking of my lord, who came with the first cherry-blossoms of the spring.' Then she touched the jeweled pin that he had sent her. 'I was glad you had not forgotten me. And glad for the poem you sent me. I was not mistaken, then, in thinking my lord a poet!'

" 'You bring poems from my heart,' he said, 'as the wind brings music from the wind-bell,'—and he thought of how last night the moonlight had cast on the paper window of her chamber the shadow of a wind-bell—a shadow that swayed vaguely to and fro, while from the porch came its

ghostly tinkle. A panel in the wall had stood half open, and the moonlight had swept in across the floor; and a cloud, journeying across the moon, had darkened with its shadow the face of Spring Flower. And remembering these shadows, he said to her now: 'I am not truly here, my beloved; I know that I am sitting in the counting-house of a stern old merchant in Mito, dreaming a boy's dreams. The light of my desire has cast my shadow for a moment into your life—that is all.'

"'You do wrong to believe that,' she said. 'You and I are real, and Mito is only a bad dream.' She shivered. 'I know—for I have dreamed that dream of Mito. In my dream I seemed to be a child, a little girl of seven; a poor little girl, wishing for the laughter and bright colors and happiness that she never could have: my father a porter, a human beast of burden, with a back scarred and deformed by his burdens—my mother, gaunt and weary from endless toil, his servant and the sharer of his sorrows—and I, their child, doomed to become a drudge like her—oh, yes, I have dreamed that dream! And in my dream there was a little boy, a few years older than I, with the eyes of a poet and the bearing of a prince—a rich merchant's son. I wanted to play with him, I wanted him to say kind and beautiful things to me, such things as never are said by

human beasts of burden, even if they are kind, to the women who humbly serve them and share their miseries. And in my dream this rich merchant's son sometimes looked at me and smiled as I stood in my rags in the doorway of my father's house. And he passed on without a word, for what speech could there ever be between us? And at night I wept, to know that I was unworthy of him. Yes, you see I too have dreamed the bad dream of Mito.'

" 'And you,' he said wonderingly, 'are that little girl!'

" 'No,' she answered, smiling, 'I tell you it is only a bad dream. And here'—she offered him a cup of the steaming rice-wine—'is a charm against bad dreams. Drink, my beloved, and then I will sing to you again.'

"That night the light doze of Osomé was broken by her mistress's soft hand-clap. She opened the sliding panel of Spring Flower's chamber, and peered around the screen. 'Tea,' commanded Spring Flower, 'and cakes, and sweetmeats.—When we talk so much,' she said to her lover, 'we must have some refreshment. And now tell me—but, no, I will ask no more questions. Mito is the same as it was—it will always remain the same. But what have we to do with such things as Mito!'

"Through the open panel in the black outer wall the light of the waning moon entered softly. It silvered the creamy folds of their silken night-dresses, and became entangled in Spring Flower's eyelashes. From the garden came the faint sound of the cherry blossoms shaken in the wind. 'The blossoms only last three days in Tokio,' she said. 'Already they have commenced to fall.'

"At noon, after they had breakfasted merrily in her chamber, she took him into the garden. At the foot of the steps were garden-clogs ready for them; flat stones made an irregular path about the tiny pond to the miniature Fuji with its little twisted pine trees. Beyond was a pavilion for tea-drinking, overhung with vines, and further off a single cherry tree—a cloud of blossoms. They walked on the strewn petals, inventing sweet names for each other. He thought of Ofumi, whom he was to marry next year, and who would live with him in the gloomy shadows of his father's house. He sighed.

" 'Why are you sad, my beloved?'

" 'I was thinking of Mito,' he said. 'I shall have to go back there. I had thought of losing myself in Tokio, of becoming an artisan. But what could I do? My hands are untrained. And I am my father's only son. He will seek for me and find me and take me home. I shall be back in Mito.'

" 'You will have memories,' she said, 'if you wish to keep them.'

" 'Memories are not enough,' he said impatiently. 'O Spring Flower, do you not wish we could destroy Mito, destroy everything that is reaching out its iron fingers toward our happiness?'

" 'Every poet has wished that,' she said softly. 'But the iron fingers are too strong. Nevertheless, they shall not part us yet. You will stay with me to-night, beloved?'

"That night an anxious merchant from Mito made inquiries at the Tokio-*ya* concerning his son. He was met with polite and reassuring smiles. 'Do not be alarmed, honorable sir,' they told him. 'Your son will come back. It is only that he is young, and in Tokio!' They knew much of life, those people.

"There was moonlight on the floor of Spring Flower's chamber. But beauty could not assuage the grief and anger in Isamu's heart. 'I hate my father!' he cried wildly in Spring Flower's arms.

"And she whispered: 'Is it true, my beloved, that no woman has ever told you that you are the most beautiful of men?'

" 'I will not be a dutiful son any longer!' he muttered.

"And she whispered to him again: 'O golden

humming-bird, the sweetest honey lies yet untasted at the flower's heart!'

"'I want you to be mine for ever, Spring Flower!'

"'Hush, my beloved!' she said sadly."

At this point in the story-telling, there was an interruption. We were sufficiently under the spell of the narrative to have scarcely noticed a mere knock on the door—except that it brought Fan abruptly to her feet with a startled look. One would almost have thought that she had been expecting some unwelcome visit. She stood there a moment as if to compose herself, and summon up her courage, and then went resolutely to the door, with a brief look behind. I think she was seeing our careless attitudes, as we sat or lay star-scattered about the studio floor, with the eyes of a possible maiden aunt from Shiloh! But it was only a messenger boy with a telegram. She stood in the door staring at it while the boy clattered whistling down the stairs; and then she shut the door and came back to us smiling, with the telegram crushed in her hand.

"Is anything the matter?" Carlo asked.

"No—nothing," she said. "It's too bad to have the story broken into like that—please go on." She took up the glass which she had set on the mantel over the fireplace when she rose; it was

empty. "But first may I help myself to a drink?" And while she spoke she looked about, in that way she could not help, for some man to perform this service for her. I rose. "I'll mix you one," I said, and went to the kitchen. She followed me restlessly, and stood there silent and preoccupied with her thoughts while I chopped ice. Carlo came in a moment later, and demanded of her abruptly: "Who is that from?"

"My mother," she said, and showed it to him.

"Oh-ho!" he said, thoughtfully. "She's really coming!"

"Yes."

"And who's this Aunt Elvira that's coming along?"

"Her sister. And I don't know what to do, Carlo! I've staved the family off as long as I could. I think they're suspicious. At any rate, thank goodness, they haven't walked in on us without warning."

"Wouldn't that be the best thing," he said, "just to let them walk in on us? They might as well know the truth."

She shook her head. "I hate scenes so! And what would be the use of it? You don't suppose for a moment they'd let me go on living here with you?"

"We can run down to the City Hall," he said. "Then they couldn't object."

"Oh, they couldn't? Couldn't they, though! I'd like to see their faces at that news. You may not realize it, Carl dear, but no Breckenridge in all the history of America has ever married anybody with a name like Ostrovsky. I think they'd much more easily accept the fact of my living in sin with you!"

"And is that the way you feel about it too?" he asked haughtily.

"Carlo, darling," she said, "we've argued all that out. It would simply mean that they'd cut me off; and you know I can't support myself. I'm no good at any kind of work. I haven't earned enough in these eight months to keep me in underclothes—you know that. It's just no use my trying to hold a job!"

"And I," he said bitterly, "can't support you. Not now—perhaps never."

"No, poor darling—and I don't want you to. I'd be an awful nuisance to you as a wife."

"I'd take the chance of that," he said. "We'd get along somehow."

"No, Carlo—I can't marry a poor man. I've been too badly brought up."

They had apparently forgotten my presence; and I should have been more ill at ease during this intimate conversation, if they had not already discussed the matter openly, in our Greenwich Village fashion. This was only the expected

climax of a situation which we all knew about, and had talked over for months, without having been able to offer any happy solution; every one here to-night, except of course our Japanese friend, could guess the nature of that telegram, and would be awaiting anxiously the conclusion of this kitchen conference. We all wanted to save Fan from the dreadful fate of going back to Shiloh. We had all tried to think of something she could make a living at here in New York; but she had been brought up for twenty years to be gracefully and expensively useless—that was just the trouble. In our admiration and affection for her there had been, at first, because of this decorative uselessness of hers, a shade of kindly mockery, which turned soon enough into pity when we came to know her better. The tragic problem of a soul that truly desired freedom and yet lacked hands capable of securing and defending it, had left us all bewildered. In time, as we devoutly believed, she would have learned to be self-supporting—but these months of effort had only proved to her how ill adapted she was to the struggle for existence. She was now utterly discouraged about herself—and the fact that she had only that day been fired from a job she had tried terribly hard to hold and had fondly believed she was getting along very well with, was perhaps the final stroke of disillusion.

"Oh, well," said Carlo, "I can move out tomorrow, if that's the answer."

"It's hell," said Fan, bitterly. "But I know one thing—my kid sister is going to learn to earn her own living! At least, I can see to that."

"You'll go back with them, then?"

"They'll make me, Carlo. That's what they've come here for. I've put them off with lies as long as I could."

"I'm sick of these lies!" said Carlo savagely.

"Yes, I know—but you don't *have* to lie to anybody. I do. If it weren't for my lies, we never could have known each other at all," she said defensively.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean that. I—damn it all, I love you, Fan!"

"And I love you, Carlo boy!"

They clung to each other for a moment desperately. They were right in front of the closed door, and I couldn't get out without disturbing them.

"But," she said, "we might as well face the truth between ourselves. They won't ever let me come back here. They'll keep me in Shiloh."

"And marry you off?"

"Must you think of that now? What is the difference? Oh, yes, they will try to marry me off."

"Will you let them?" he demanded. "Oh, I've

no right to ask that," he went on bitterly. "Why should you stay an old maid for my sake? It's ridiculous. And that man you've told me about—the one your mother wants you to marry—it will be him, I suppose."

"Suppose it, then, if it gives you any pleasure," she said coldly. "I'm not asking who your next Greenwich Village sweetheart will be." She turned away from him.

"Oh, Fan! Fan!" he cried out in torment, putting his hand on her shoulder.

"I know," she said. "It's the way life is. We must forgive each other, Carlo. Whatever happens—we've had *this!*"

They were again in each other's arms. The door was clear, and I might slip out quietly and leave them in this farewell embrace. But I didn't want to go, and for an odd reason. The others, out there in the studio, would read from my face the conclusion of this scene. They would know that Fan was going back to Shiloh, to marry a man who could take care of her; they would know that her brave adventure was to be only a sentimental episode in her life—and I couldn't face them with that news. Because I didn't wish to believe it was true. I didn't want to believe that Greenwich Village was no more than that to Fan. I couldn't accept what had happened as the

last word. The scene wasn't over for me—and so I waited, desperately, chopping more ice.

But just then Fan took notice of my existence, and said to me: "Please tell them to go on with the story and not wait for us!"

I went out into the studio, avoiding the anxious eyes of Fan's and Carlo's friends, and delivered that message.

"It was practically finished," said the story-teller. "The end can readily be imagined. But if you wish me to put it into words, here it is." And he went on:

"At sunset the lovers walked for the last time in the little garden; stood on the tiny lacquered bridge to feed the scarlet carp; and drank tea under the vines. They were saying farewell to the place of their happiness.

"The ground was carpeted with white petals. 'See,' said Spring Flower, 'how few are left now on the tree!' The glow of sunset beyond the walls was dying away, and there had come up a little sharp wind from the west. The temple bells chimed the hour, and as if in the solemn vibration of their chime the last blossoms trembled and drifted down softly. A misty rain began to fall.

"'*Sayonara!*'

"'*Sayonara!*'

"When he had reached the gate of the town of Green Houses, Isamu realized that he had no money to pay for a jinrikisha. 'Well, what does it matter?' he thought, and set off on foot, across the dyke. A jinrikisha hurried past, bearing an eager youth toward the gate—the first of the evening throng.

"Halfway across, Isamu turned and looked back. He saw the weather-beaten gate, and the lonely willow beside it—'the looking-back willow,' so named because it is the last thing one sees as one goes away. Then Isamu turned, and walked on, in the rain."

We thanked the story-teller, and praised him for his tale. But in all of our minds it had another meaning that he did not quite know about—a meaning that had shaken our gay confidence in ourselves. In spite of myself, I was taking this as the end of that scene in the kitchen. Would Fan look back that way at Washington Arch from the bus that took her for the last time up Fifth Avenue to the station? Some one was arguing half-irritably with the story-teller over the sociological implications of his tale, and he was maintaining a polite and skeptical calm. He looked so sure! Was life like that, after all? Fan would come in, in a moment; and we should never know, to look at her face, of the ordeal she had gone

through nor the decision she had arrived at; her training had done that for her. Oh, they would both be good sports about it all! . . . I couldn't bear not knowing any longer. I went boldly to the kitchen, and entered. They did not look up, and I stood there against the closed door.

Fan was perched upon the kitchen table, frowning.

"What are you thinking about, now?" asked Carlo.

"About my kid sister," she said. "And about my Aunt Elvira. There's a story about my Aunt Elvira. She gave up the man she was in love with, and never married. The family objected to him, for some reason. But now I realize something that I never knew. I've always been a favorite of hers; and when I was a little girl she used to talk to me seriously—seriously and vaguely. She was trying to tell me something; and now I think that she was trying to tell me what I've been planning to tell my kid sister. But I was a gay and giddy little thing, and it meant nothing to me. It won't mean anything to my kid sister, either—not a damn thing. Because I shan't tell her the truth—I shan't dare. I'm too much of a coward. And in the end I'll give up trying to help her. In ten years I'll be like everybody else in Shiloh. Here's Aunt Elvira coming to tell me now that mother knows best

after all. I shall be like that.—Isn't life funny?"

"You won't be like that," he said.

"Oh, yes, I shall. And if I'm faithful to your memory, Carlo, and don't marry anybody—then I'll think that young people haven't any right to be braver than I was. I'll have all my Greenwich Village memories laid away in lavender, and I'll take them out now and then and sniffle over them—the way that God-damn' Jap is doing with his romantic memories of some slant-eyed beauty back home, and telling us that we're just like him and that girl. Well, I guess we are."

"No, we're not. I'm not afraid of two old women—and I don't believe you are!"

"Yes, I am, Carlo. Those two old women have all the world's wisdom between them. They know what will happen to me if I try to be braver than I am. And they're quite right about it. I'll fail—miserably. The only thing is—perhaps my failure might help my kid sister to get free. She'd know the truth, at least—she'd know that a girl didn't have to stay in Shiloh!"

"You'll stick it out, then?" he said eagerly.

"I don't know. If I do stick it out—it won't be a pretty story for either of us to sentimentalize over. Without money to spend, I'll be unhappy, I know that. We'll be sick of each other many a time. I doubt if it will work out at all. I'll be wretched without all the pretty things you

couldn't buy me. I'm lazy—and ignorant—and a coward. I'll make a failure of it, I'm sure. I'll be a hell of a helpmeet to you, Carlo. But—if you want me to try—"

"Good girl!" he almost shouted, lifting her triumphantly in his arms.

"I'll go out and look for another job to-morrow morning!" she said.

We all went back into the studio. "I'm so sorry," said Fan, "that I couldn't hear the end of your beautiful story."

"You missed very little," he assured her. "The ending was merely the inevitable one."

I looked at Fan and Carlo, and smiled. Why should we trouble to contradict him?

Epilogue: The Fall of Greenwich Village

White against the roof-tops and black against the sky,
Wheeling in squadrons, the pigeons fly—
Like deadly planes that hover over towns aflame!
Like confetti flung from windows when the peace-news
came!

Oh, why must I remember what I would forget?
Why wheel my fancies in that weary circle yet?
War and peace, peace and war—that is all I know!
Shall I never see birds as I saw them long ago?

The Fall of Greenwich Village

IF Greenwich Village was not quite a myth, it may yet become one. It needs, like Troy, only a poet to sing its fall:

"How many a strength hath fallen since thy fall,
Ah, Troy! yet still must men remember thee,
Though none doth weep o'er Corinth's funeral,
Nor Carthage left forsaken by the sea,
Orchomenos, nor Thebes, nor Nineveh!
All these have been and are not, but the fate
Of Troy, that never was, how wondrously
It moves the heart in these swift years and late!"

Greenwich Village, doubtless, was nothing much to sing of; but neither, perhaps, was Troy!

"A castle built in cloud-land; or at most
A crumbling clay-fort on a windy hill,
Where needy men might flee a robber host,
This, this was Troy! and yet she holds us still;
And I that rhyme, right sore against my will
And lingering long before the words of woe,
This ending of my task must I fulfill
And tell the tale of Ilios' overthrow."

So sang one of Troy's poets; and so, in prosier words, say I. This Greenwich Village, this dingy slum where "needy men might flee" for peace from the victorious hosts of a huge robber-civilization too ready to enslave them to its dull tasks,—this tiny refuge for desperate young lovers of beauty, in the midst of the rushing metropolis,—this fragile respite of theirs was already doomed. Greenwich Village could not remain forever islanded amid the roaring tides of commerce. Already the barriers were being broken down; Seventh Avenue was being extended southward, the new subway was being laid; in a little while the magic isolation of the Village would be ended. The tangle of crooked streets would be pierced by a great straight road, the beautiful crumbling houses of great rooms and high ceilings and deep-embrasured windows would be ruthlessly torn down to make room for modern apartment-buildings; the place would become like all the rest of New York City—its gay, proud life would be extinguished. This was inevitable. . . . But a worse and swifter doom than we could guess was to fall upon Greenwich Village. It was to become a side-show for tourists, a peep-show for vulgarians, a commercial exhibit of tawdry Bohemianism.

Let me briefly set forth the causes of that catastrophe.

Little restaurants, of which Polly's had been the first, sprang up to minister to our comforts, tucked away in basements and garrets, gay with varicolored furniture, named with odd, childish, playful names. Here did the serpent enter Eden, demonstrating again the dear old doctrine of economic determinism. Restaurants can scarcely cater exclusively to the impecunious élite—though an honorable few bravely did so, till overtaken by the Day of Reckoning; a quixotic example that was not widely imitated. These little restaurants served to advertise the Village to the people from up town, who presently began to come on sight-seeing tours, with their pockets full of money and their hearts full of a pathetic eagerness to participate in the celebrated joys of Bohemian life. The restaurants responded by laying on villagy quaintness in thick daubs, to tickle the fancy of the visiting bourgeoisie; and every day new restaurants and tea-shops sprang up underfoot and overhead to meet the demands of this new clientele.

As for the Villagers, they left these restaurants as fast as they were invaded by the up-town crowds; they found new eating-places, as yet unknown to the invaders—only to be forced sooner or later to flee from these in turn! It was partly a question of finances; good food at a cheap price was not what the up-towners desired—they

wanted atmosphere; and the restaurateurs concentrated on atmosphere to the neglect of cuisine, in deference to their whim.

But it was not merely a matter of food; a certain Village snobbishness was also involved. These up-towners, like all foreigners, were judged inevitably by their worst representatives—and some of them were pretty bad. Too many of them had no manners: they flocked in to stare and giggle and make loud remarks; and they tried, half enviously and half contemptuously, to buy their way into Village companionship. They thought nothing of intruding upon a private party, introducing themselves, asking to be shown about, and offering genially to pay for everything! It was rather pitiful, this anxious desire, on the part of people who had worked respectably all their lives, to be shown how to play; but it was very tiresome. And what could we do about it? There they were; we could not put them out of our Village! We could only, if it came to that desperate pass, go away ourselves.

We had left one thing out of our calculations: the fact that we had something which it seemed all bourgeois America—sick to death of its machine-made efficiency and scared respectability—wistfully desired to share with us: we had

freedom and happiness. And these fellow-citizens of ours had the money with which to buy, as they fondly hoped, freedom and happiness. And with that golden key they did, indeed, open the door to our citadel.

Confession is good for the soul. I was one of those who, with the best of intentions, assisted in that betrayal; for I was one of a committee which went about looking for a place to hold the first Greenwich Village ball, and discovered Webster Hall. Those balls finished the process which the restaurants had begun. Yes, and it was I who furnished, out of my Roget's "Thesaurus," that name, "Pagan Rout," so potent in its appeal to the fevered imaginations of the bourgeoisie! The first of these Village balls were, perhaps, all that the credulous up-towner could have dreamed; they were spontaneously joyous and deliberately beautiful—focusing in a mood of playfulness that passion for loveliness which had after all brought us to the Village; but the later balls were likely to be dreadful, being given merely to make money. It pays to advertise some things, but not freedom and happiness; it is too easy for the ignorant purchaser to accept a cheap substitute. We had, in fact, shown the more commercially enterprising among us another way to make money out of the bourgeoisie.

The Villagers were beginning to leave the village for the suburbs; and those that still remained were hard to find, so closely did they secrete themselves. And now, to fill the gap left by their disappearance from their old haunts, appeared a kind of professional "Villager," playing his antics in public for pay or profit. Doubtless it is necessary for people to make a living; and perhaps this method was as honest as most others; still, there was something shocking about it—to a Villager. It was a bitter thing to have to look at these professionals, and realize that this was the sort of person oneself was supposed to be! Perhaps the imitation, like a malicious caricature, was too close for comfort; and the foundations of a future settled respectability may have been laid in the heart of many a careless inhabitant of the Village by seeing just some such mawkish counterfeit, and having to ask himself, "Do I really seem like that?"

There was one—I will call him Willy the Wisp. He went about from table to table, in the Village restaurants, selling his candies—"psychic candies," he called them, in the line of patter which accompanied the sale. "They are the color of your psyche," he would say gently. "Yes, dear lady, I have looked into your subconsciousness, and seen its secret need, and these are especially for you!" The visiting bourgeoisie, vastly enter-

tained, sat attentively listening to his whole speech from beginning to end—flattering themselves perhaps that they were being inducted into the mysteries of Village psychology. It pleased them, too—looking at his frail slip of a body, so utterly useless in the mills of industry from which they drew the profits they were out spending to-night—it pleased them, no doubt, to pay him a quarter for a handful of sweets. Perhaps they had a sense of patronizing the arts! Perhaps, in finding somebody in the Village to patronize, they were triumphing over it, asserting the final superiority of their own respectable virtues over its wayward freedoms. . . . But why did I suffer when I saw Willy the Wisp come into a restaurant?—why did I writhe in my chair as he delivered his pretty little speeches?—why did I turn away, and wish I wasn't there, and try not to hear or see him? Was it, indeed, as some cynical person might say, that he was too much a symbolic figure nakedly revealing the state of all the arts to-day, of all the artists, and even of my haughty and scornful self?—offering the bourgeoisie, in our poems and pictures and plays and stories, "psychic candies," and saying gently, "Yes, dear lady, I have looked into your subconsciousness, and seen its secret need, and these are especially for you!"—then pocketing the reward with a shameless smirk. Oh, I have no doubt

Willy the Wisp despised the bourgeoisie as much as ever I did! I applaud his enterprise in selling bonbons for top prices; and perhaps bonbons were the very utmost of his creative capacities. Yet he was to me a half-tragic and utterly painful figure, filling me with a sense of shame and futile rage. I suppose I wanted Willy the Wisp, for the honor of Greenwich Village, to bang that fat profiteer over the head with his tray, and go, free and happy, off to jail! The idea must have occurred to him more than once, but no doubt he dismissed it as absurd. And Greenwich Village was no longer as absurd as it used to be—it was becoming more practical every day; even in its apparent madnesses there was good sound business method. That was perhaps the trouble with it.

And there was another thing, which I will touch upon but lightly. It was impossible to escape some association with those barbarians from up town. Sooner or later one got to know them. The most chauvinistic and prejudiced Villager was sooner or later caught speaking to them. And, of course, it was then discovered that all up-towners were by no means such impossible folk! In fact, the more one saw of them, the more one felt them to be not so different after

all from one's precious self. Some of them, indeed, were very nice.

Could this be because oneself was becoming bourgeois? Perhaps! For one could hardly possess a talent and exercise it in the Village for several years without attracting some notice from the outside world and beginning to reap some worldly rewards from it. And gradually one discovered in oneself certain bourgeois traits—the desire for, say, a house in the country, and children, and a settled life—for one becomes tired even of freedom! Then let the bourgeoisie take Greenwich Village, by all means! We would move to the country, and be respectable!

And yet—not all of us moved to the country, and settled down, and became respectable. Concerning these different fates which might befall a Villager, let me tell a story, which I shall change only enough to avoid giving pain.

In those days when our Village, though doomed, still brightly lived—in the latter days of that time of dreams which now seems like a dream—four young men sat at a table in the Purple Purp. At ten in the morning on that winter day, the Purple Purp was a leisurely place—so leisurely that the young man who brought us our ham and eggs and coffee paused

to join with us in an argument about *vers libre;* and the blue-smocked, bobbed-haired girl in charge had time to dance with us in turn, to the music of the phonograph. We were the only patrons of the Purple Purp at that untimely hour.

We were breakfasting after a long night of talk and a few hours' sleep in some one's studio. There had been a party, and much drinking of hot mulled wine; and of the dozen who still lingered after the rest had departed, nobody wanted to go home in the snow; so the obliging host and hostess pulled mattresses from various couches and made one vast divan across one end of the studio floor, upon which the exhausted revelers might fall and sleep. The party danced and played and quarreled and made up about us unheeded, rose to its climax of friendly racket and hullabaloo, and died down at last into the peace of stupor—except for us in our corner, who still raised our voices noisily in the silence, shouting eager speech to each other. And then, toward dawn, weariness suddenly came upon us; and after briefly considering going out through the snowy streets to our own beds, we flung ourselves down wherever we could find room.

Our argument had become rather maudlin toward the last, not from drink but from sleepiness. Heaven knows how, we had got on to the subject of children, and their relation to the ar-

tistic life. Julian had said an artist had no right to have children; Ben remarked impatiently that in the future the community would take care of children and not leave them to the private enterprise of parents; and Paul suggested that children might enjoy and profit by the candor of a Bohemian home. I remember that discussion, because just as I was dropping off to sleep a few moments later, a door off the studio opened, and two children entered, a boy and a girl, about three and four years old, clad in their nightgowns and very wide awake. They did not seem to be surprised at seeing the sleepers on the floor; they wandered curiously about, looking at our sleeping figures by the pale light of city dawn that filtered in through the skylight. They were regarding us with that air of respectful deference with which children view the proceedings of adult life.

"That's Mrs. Doe, and here's Mr. Doe," said the little boy. It was odd to hear these two friends of mine described as Mr. and Mrs.—as though they were grown-up people, and not the most delightful and irresponsible artist-children in the world! So they went about, identifying us, calling us by the titles of our adulthood. "That's father over there," said the little boy, pointing to our gay and whimsical host. I became more sharply aware of the identity of the lovely madcap on the divan to my right, whose tangled

curls fell all about her sleeping head—and I waited for these children to give her presently her due rank and title in the world in which, according to them, she belonged. The little girl paused thoughtfully in front of her. "And here's mother!" she said.

Somehow it seemed both sad and funny that she should be that! There was an incongruous and pathetic dignity in the term. I smiled with close-shut eyes, and her son and daughter passed on, tiptoeing so as not to wake these men and women whose privilege it was, as rulers of the great world, to stay up all night and go to bed at dawn. And then I slept, and awakened in broad daylight in the disheveled studio, and went with my three friends to the Purple Purp for breakfast. And now the discussion that had gone on all night was resumed again—to last all day, until late in the evening.

I had known these three others for some time, but it so happened that yesterday was the first time we had all met together. To-day, as we sat at the table, drinking our endless cups of coffee and smoking cigarettes, the differences that had made us clash all night in argument began to seem less interesting than the fundamental likeness beneath those differences; and we began to talk of that, and to celebrate it, jestingly and yet with a kind of wonder.

We were different enough in our histories. Julian had been the spoiled and tyrannized son of rich parents; they had tried to make a business man and a respectable citizen out of him. He wanted to be a poet; and he had just mustered up the courage to leave his business—and his wife—and come to Greenwich Village to write poetry and starve. Of course, no one ever did quite starve in Greenwich Village; it was one of the beautiful things about the place that no one who thought he could write or paint or make music need ever go hungry if he were not too proud to share the hospitable poverty of his friends. Here Julian was; and the path which had led him to us was strewn with ruins.

Paul there, leaning back in his chair and flicking his ashes to the floor with a nervous gesture, was a young reporter who had rashly thrown up a good newspaper job and come to New York to write short stories full of a brutal and uncompromising realism. He had been here a year and had yet to sell his first story. But he wrote on. There was no discouragement in his face; and if there seemed to be a brooding melancholy in his dark eyes, it may have been over the difficulty which, even in Greenwich Village, attends upon the having of too many love-affairs at one time. He made a precarious and uncertain living, just enough to keep him going; I remember his tell-

ing me afterward that a loaf of bread left in his room, after a party we had had there one evening, had been his food for the next three days. And his emotional life was by far the most irregular, at this period, of all our lives; while the mood of the Village was now lapsing into domesticity of a sort, he still maintained a fierce and complicated freedom. And yet, in spite of all this economic and emotional wretchedness, he had an air of earnestly pursuing some deliberated course of action; there was, I remember Julian saying laughingly, a kind of perverse puritanism in Paul's Bohemian habits.

Ben, my third friend, had been a tramp, and was now involved in revolutionary politics. He looked a little of the vagabond still, a kind of Gypsy-man, with his thin muscular body decked out in corduroys and flaming necktie and flannel shirt, and his queer-shaped laughing face and rumpled hair. It was an accident, of a career diversified by many accidents, that had brought him here. He laughed at Greenwich Village, he despised it—he regarded us as idlers, triflers, butterflies of a summer's day; or, as he liked to put it, children playing on the edge of a volcano. He lived in a world of violent realities—of strikes and jails and the untold atrocities of the continual vendetta between militant capitalism and the militant proletariat—and, beyond that, in a world

of violent hopes and fears, of world wars, of famine, pestilence, and class massacre. But, though he scorned us as the butterflies of a day, the thought of our impending extinction in the world cataclysm moved him, I think, to love us all the more and make the best of our society while yet he might.

In a sense I was the bond between the three, for I could understand them all. In our long night of splendid and useless argument, in which they had come no nearer agreement than a mere friendly contempt for each other's illusions, I had agreed with each of them in turn. Julian believed that the world needed beauty, Paul that it needed candor, and Ben that it needed the cleansing flame of revolution. And meanwhile the world remained deeply indifferent to all our efforts on behalf of beauty, truth, and the future. That neglect was the bond which drew us together. In howsoever different ways, we all scorned the world we lived in.

But, as it seemed at this moment, the strange thing about our companionship was not that we had by devious individual paths come together at last, nor that, coming together, we had been able to recognize beneath these surface differences of opinion the same deep disdain of the accustomed ways of the world; no, the strange thing was that it should have taken us so long to find each other.

Oddly enough, Paul had once worked as a reporter in the town in which Julian grew up; and they had met and despised each other. That was more astonishing now than complete unawareness of each other's existence would have been. It was not circumstances merely that had kept them apart; it was ignorance and fear. And, as if to complete the irony, Ben had chanced to be in that same town, years ago, for a few days, as a tramp. "I remember," he said, "that some kind gent gave me a dime on Christmas day—and maybe that kind gent was one of you two boys! Anyway, I was about starving, and that dime helped me to the biggest free lunch in town."

They began to orient their memories with reference to Ben's sojourn in that town. They fixed the time, seven years ago, and reckoned up their ages at that date. What were they all doing that Christmas eve?

"I had just come home from college for the holidays," said Julian.

"I was covering a story for the 'Record,'" said Paul.

"And I," said Ben, "was sleeping under a railway trestle."

"I might have been spared years of misery if I had known you boys then," said Julian wistfully. "I thought I was all alone in that town."

"I, too," said Paul. "I hadn't a friend in the

world—except Flaubert. With a live man to talk to, I might have made the break sooner."

"I was lonely enough," said Ben.

And they had none of them, in their loneliness, suspected that the town might hold friends—friends that were to be—and yet never now, perhaps, such friends as they might have been then when most they needed each other.

They played for a while with the fancy of what would have happened if they had all met that Christmas eve—say, down town in a barroom; would they have had a true word to say to one another?

"If you think I'd have told the truth, in the presence of an enterprising young reporter," said Julian, "you are very deeply ignorant of the psychology of protective coloration! I'd have been afraid to open my mouth."

"And I'd not have failed to remember," said Paul, "that your father was one of the stockholders of the dirty sheet I worked for. Give myself away in front of you—no, thank you!"

"You *were* pretty scared of each other!" said Ben.

"That's how America managed to keep us apart so long," said Julian; "by making sure we'd never know each other if we did chance to meet. And a pretty good job it was, too. It's taken us a good many years to find each other. But we

fooled 'em, after all. Here we are—safe in Greenwich Village!"

Yes, here we were; and it seemed as though something ought to be done about it—something adequate to mark the occasion. But—after all, we had not triumphed over the hostile world; we had merely escaped from it with our lives. We were still to perform those deeds which would justify our revolt. But we were still young; give us seven years more!

We began to talk of those next seven years—not quite as noisily as we had talked of the seven gone before. For all our bravado, the mystery of an unknown future oppressed us. What would happen to our lives in those seven years? What would we have accomplished, in our chosen realms of the Beautiful, the True, and the Utopian—what found or failed to find—what "of despair, of rapture, of derision"?

Ah, well! When those seven years were over—then we would know. And we could tell each other then.

So it was that, lingering late in the evening at that table, we planned to meet again in seven years. We fixed the date in our minds. It would be in December of the year 1924.

At the same place—at the same hour—at the same table.

That evening in December, 1924, came.

I went to the Purple Purp—now under another name; things had changed in Greenwich Village, as all over the world.

I went, though I knew the meeting we had planned could not be held.

Paul might be there—if he remembered, and if he cared to come. Fortune had changed for Paul in the meantime; and perhaps Paul himself had changed. I did not know; I had not seen him for a long time. But I knew he was very successful, very prosperous. He might not care to attend so melancholy a memorial as this.

For Julian was dead, by his own hand.

And Ben, for the sake of his opinions, was in prison.

I had been dulled to tragedy, I thought. So many had died—more nobly, doubtless, than Julian—but the death of one's friend is different. It strikes into one's own personal life, throwing its shadow into every little corner of one's daily thoughts. It afflicts with the poignant ache of unanswerable questionings. And yet it was not the dead I mourned; Julian was at peace; it was his living and suffering self of yesterday that had, as a debt paid too late, my praise and pity. Must one's friend die before one can know how much one loved him?

Nor, perhaps, need I mourn for my friend in prison. He knew well enough what prison meant, and he need not have gone; he might have been out in the sunshine to-day. But prison was a part of the career he had deliberately chosen for himself. His mind was braced to meet it. And yet—can any one be so utterly prepared as to face without regret the loss of liberty, of friends and love? These things were as dear to him as to any man alive; and I must wish them for him, even though he had heroically put them by. Ten years?—I told myself it would not be so long. But it had been nearly a year already that Ben had been in prison. How many years, I wondered, would it be before I saw him free? Another year? Two more years? These things were not agreeable to think about; and therefore I had to think about them. The pain of these thoughts was a debt I owed, if to nothing else, at least to friendship.

Julian and Ben—I had seen them both many times since that day when we talked so gayly together. I had bidden Ben good-by on his way to prison, and I had seen Julian only a few days before his self-willed death. I had reproached myself afterward for not having somehow saved him; if only I had been with him that day! For it was a mood; and (who should know better than

I!) such moods pass. Yet some men—and Julian was one of them—are ruled by their moods. Who was I to have hoped to stand between my friend and his dark wish? I knew something, and could guess more, of the motives which had irresistibly impelled him to his act. And, as I thought of his life, it seemed to me that I ought to have known all along to what end it was shaping itself.

The determination of events is so clear in retrospect! Seen so, his death was as inevitable—had been as inevitable that day when we sat so gayly talking at the little table—as plain for a prophetic eye to read, as the fate of Ben. And perhaps (I began to think) those other fates, Paul's and mine, had been on the cards, too!

I found, when I came into the restaurant, that I had done Paul an injustice in doubting that he would come. He was there, waiting for me at the little table.

We found it at first hard to talk to each other. It seemed absurd to carry out our old promise and tell what had happened in those seven years to *us*. It would have been too smug a mockery of those two friends of ours, for whom destiny had no sweeter gift than the prison and the grave.

So I was thinking when presently Paul leaned back in his chair, flicked with that nervous ges-

ture of his a tiny cigarette-ash to the floor, and, with the old look of brooding in his eyes, began to speak.

"I suppose," he said, "under the circumstances, I ought to be ashamed of being so—successful. Well, I'm not. The truth is, I don't care.

"I tried," he went on, "to do the thing I wanted to do—tell the truth. People don't want to hear it. They may, some day—in that future Ben was always talking about. They may; but I doubt it. They prefer lying dreams—and probably they always will. I've learned, you see—and it's taken me long enough—what the human mind is really like. And it's nothing to cry about. I've always been clever enough at telling lies; and I might as well lie for the magazines at twenty cents a word as for the newspapers at space-rates."

I said something, but he paid no attention, and went on.

"The other night Bilkins gave a party. Bilkins," he explained, "is a suburban neighbor of ours, a commonplace and unimportant cog in the machine of big business, whose income is nevertheless considerably larger than that of the President of the United States. We were invited, my wife and I; and we went. I have been working hard, lately, and not going to any suburban parties, so my impressions were fairly

sharp. I remember that I contrasted this party with the one that time here in the Village, you remember, when we talked all night with Julian and Ben. The great difference, of course, was that at this party there wasn't any talk, and there was all the booze in the world. In Greenwich Village, as I remember it, we were all young idealists. If we kissed the girls, we did it on principle; we didn't have to get drunk to do it, so that we wouldn't remember it next morning and be ashamed of ourselves. In fact, if we ever did get drunk, it was an accident; we didn't do it on purpose—we didn't need to get drunk, because we were never ashamed of anything we did. The more I associate with the bourgeoisie, the more I marvel at our young innocence here in Greenwich Village. We were all so damned noble! Even the cruel things we did, were done as—as Shelley might have done them. But I think we of the bourgeoisie—for I count myself one of them, now—are wiser. We know it isn't any use to be noble. There's nothing to be noble for. We aren't fooling ourselves about Art or Revolution or Truth. We know that we're out to have a good time. Well, I drank champagne that night, which left me clear-headed. I didn't particularly enjoy kissing the girls in corners—that's a relic of my Greenwich Village training; I

am disgusted at people's doing things they think are wrong. Nevertheless, I had a good time. And that's what I want to tell you about."

He lighted another cigarette. "I had just been reading in the papers about another famine somewhere in the world. I've come near enough to starving, myself, to know what it must feel like. I thought about those starving people while I was eating Bilkins's dinner. I thought also of Ben, in his prison stripes; I was wearing a very jaunty suit of evening-clothes. I thought about Julian; I was drinking champagne, and dancing with some lovely girls. And those thoughts didn't interfere with my enjoyment. Any one would say that thinking about such things would make me miserable. But I wasn't at all miserable. Because life is like that.

"Ben in prison, for telling the truth. People don't like the truth; no wonder they put him in prison! But why should Ben be in prison for such people? Why not here at Bilkins's party, drinking champagne and dancing with some lovely girl?

"And Julian—he thought the world wanted beauty: he found out that it didn't. But why commit suicide because of that? Julian was too sensitive. He should have kept his beauty here,"—Paul struck his breast lightly—"as I keep my truth.

"No—I danced, and felt that it made very little difference where one was—in the grave like Julian, or in prison like Ben, or here at Bilkins's party. It was all the same. I wasn't sorry for Ben, or for Julian. I wasn't even sorry for myself.

"Life goes on, you know. And we go on with it. And in a very real sort of way, we enjoy ourselves. I had a very good time at that party. I have a very good time, all round. It's a mistake to suppose that one can't be happy in a meaningless world. Because at the end of all one's thinking is the question, 'Well, what of it?' And there isn't any answer, and there's nothing to do but live and enjoy life. After all, that's what we're built for."

His talk shook me more than I wished to show. It seemed to me that Paul's doom was more akin to Ben's and Julian's than I had realized. Success like his was an extreme like the prison or the grave. And yet—I could understand how Paul felt. And I respected him, in some odd way, for feeling as he did. Whoever has once lived for unreal things, such as without any disrespect one may call Beauty or Truth or the Future, can never in an utterly simple way be at home among life's realities, however good and innocent these realities may be. He can only try to—and remain an alien.

Paul put out his cigarette. "You've never been out to my place, have you? Come, and bring your wife. Helen will be delighted to show off her two lovely babies."

We shook hands, and he went away.

I sat alone at the table for a long time—and then went out to wander about the Village.

Perhaps I was seeking for something to assuage my loneliness.

I went into the old places. I saw no one I had ever known, and all was changed.

The Village—our Village—was dead and gone.

Here were young people, as young as we once had been, as gay and eager. They were the new Greenwich Villagers. They did not mind the changes, because they had never seen our Village. And perhaps they had a healthy insensitiveness to all this uglification and pretense. Under the ægis of our legendary gayety, they were enjoying themselves, in their fashion. Perhaps they were more robust than we had been. Doubtless they knew already all the things we had so painfully learned. For them the world would never suddenly go blank of meaning. They were accustomed to its not having any meaning. I saw ourselves, in retrospect, as touched with a miraculous naïveté, a Late-Victorian credulousness, a faith, happy and absurd, in the goodness and beauty of

this chaotic universe. These young people knew better. Well, it was their Village now; let them have it, and make of it what they chose!

I went out from the noise and smoke into the crisp December air, feeling old. Presently I felt older than that—I felt dead. A ghost, I walked about the midnight streets, meeting other ghosts—friends and comrades and sweethearts of those lost, happy years. Together we revisited those glimpses of the moon.

THE END

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